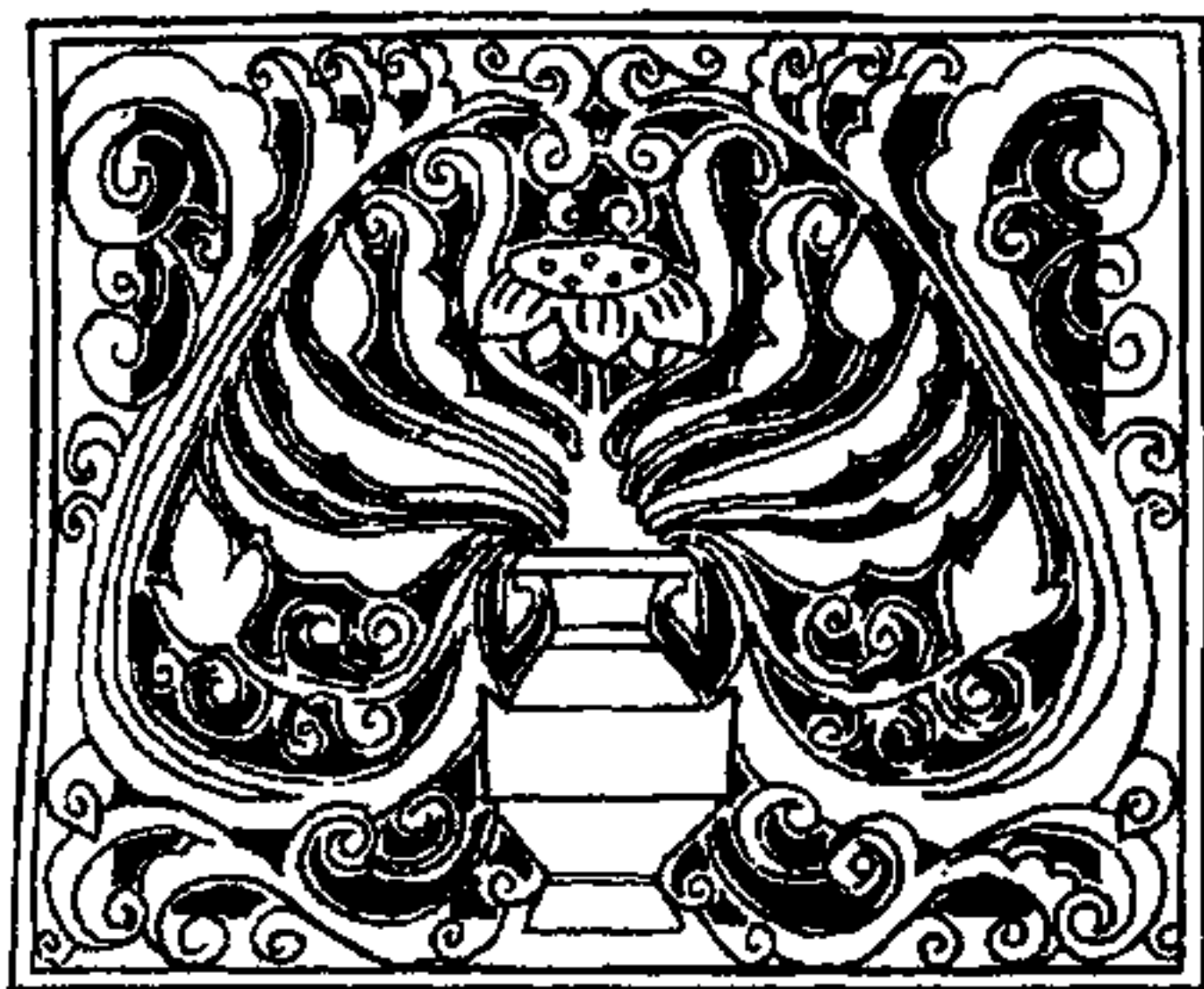




PRABUDDHA BHARATA

*A Monthly Journal of Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896*

SEPTEMBER 2000

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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Vol. 105

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No. 9

VEDIC PRAYERS

वि श्रयन्तामृतावृधः प्रयै देवेभ्यो महीः ।
पावकासः पुरुस्पृहो द्वारो देवीरसश्वतः ॥
—*Rg Veda*, 1.142.6

O Goddess of the form of Agni! Please open the door! Let the gods come in to participate in our sacrifices. These gods are the augmenters of sacrifices, venerable, great and holy; they are purifiers and the most coveted ones.

शुचिर्देवेष्वर्पिता होत्रा मरुत्सु भारती ।
इळा सरस्वती मही बर्हिः सीदन्तु यज्ञियाः ॥
—*Rg Veda*, 1.142.9

I pray to the immaculate divine speech, Bhārati, who resides with the gods and sages. I pray to the pure earthly speech, Ilā, and also to the speech of the heavens, Sarasvatī. These three deities are the three forms of Agni. May they graciously come and witness my sacrifice.

तन्नस्तुरीपमद्भुतं पुरु वारं पुरु त्मना ।
त्वष्टा पोषाय वि ष्यतु राये नाभा नो अस्मयुः ॥
—*Rg Veda*, 1.142.10

Tvaṣṭā, a special form of Agni, is our benefactor. In order to bring wealth and plenty to us, this all-pervading and powerful deity resides in the centre (*nābhi*) of clouds. For the benefit of all living beings, may he send plenty of rains to us.

What Sita's Experience Teaches Us

EDITORIAL

Two servants and two masters went in search of Sita. That became the famous episode of Sita's abduction and release, leading to the story of *Ramayana*. There is a beautiful lesson we can learn from the episode

The Maricha Episode

Sita was like a bird in the air, free and joyful. Though she was in the forest she was happy. In a few years she would have returned to Ayodhya. That day, when she was cheerfully plucking flowers, she spotted the golden deer. She saw the magic deer and felt attracted to it. She told Rama that she wanted it. Lakshmana warned that the deer was Maricha in disguise, and that a golden deer was fiction only and never fact. Sita wouldn't listen. Had she simply admired the beauty of the deer, perhaps it would have done no harm. But she said she wanted it, alive or dead. Rama had to go after the deer. It all turned out to be what Lakshmana had warned of: the deer took Rama farther and farther away from their hermitage. When Rama couldn't catch it alive, he killed it. But before dying, Maricha undid his disguise and, imitating Rama's voice, shouted, 'O Sita, O Lakshmana.' This call alerted Sita. She was terrified. She thought Rama's life was in danger and asked Lakshmana to go to help him. Lakshmana tried to convince her that none could harm Rama, and that it was all the trick of the demon Maricha. Since Lakshmana did not go, Sita imagined terrible things about his motives and spoke harsh words. When Lakshmana could no longer tolerate her tirade, he left. But before going he drew a line around the hermitage as protection and warned her never to cross that line.

How ignorance works is astounding! Brilliant intellects become fools owing to its magic; the greatest heroes fall into its trap in a moment. We live in this forest called the world

owing to our past deeds. We can progress well along the spiritual path so that soon we could reach the kingdom of supreme bliss. But suddenly, at some stage in life, something draws our attention and captivates our minds. Ignorance convinces us that that something is true and real. This ignorance is called *avidyā*. What is unreal, momentary becomes everlasting to us. With ignorance comes I-ness or *asmitā*, when we identify ourselves with the something that attracts us. We feel we want it. We fall in love with that something and nothing else attracts us then. This is called *rāga* or attachment. Then comes sane advice. People tell us that we are wrong in going after that something. But we don't heed their advice. We even become annoyed with such unwelcome advisers. This irritation is called *dveṣa*. Then comes fear—the fear of losing the object we dearly hold on to. What if we lose it? If we lose that something we can't survive; we shall die, we feel. This fear is called *abhiniveśa*. Thus, all our peace is gone. When something of this world attracts us, we lose everything: reason, peace, well-being. This is because, nothing is lasting; everything in this world is impermanent. Just like the magic deer which was killed, our 'something' too will meet its end very soon. But before it disappears, it will have committed sufficient mischief. It will have called away our power of discrimination (*viveka*) and we shall now begin to commit more and more mistakes. So when we seek impermanent things we suffer, and one day, we ourselves will quit the scene to return again to suffer.

That is according to yoga. The path of devotion also says the same thing. We are all children of God. God is love. Since we are His children, we too have some amount of love in us. The fulfilment of this love is when we

return this love to Him: it is like the stretched spring attaining to its original state. But, owing to ignorance, we love what we should not. We place our love on certain things of the world which only bring frustration and pain. The reason is, the things of the world are evanescent; they do not last all the time. In this ever-changing world what we loved yesterday may not last until tomorrow; rather, it may not appeal to us sometime later. Our job here is not to hold on to such things but to love God: that's the purpose of our lives. But the attraction for worldly things is so strong that we pour out our love on them. Yet nothing brings peace. And when we do not get what we seek, we become miserable. What we love attracts our whole attention and so, when we love something of the world, it becomes everything to us. Hence we become bound.

The Ravana Episode

When Lakshmana walked away with great hesitation, Ravana found that he could now safely show himself and came in the guise of a monk to Sita's hermitage. He tried to come near the door but the line Lakshmana had drawn was so powerful that he couldn't cross it. Sita committed one more mistake now when she stepped out of the line and tried to offer alms. That was her undoing. She was instantly caught by the demon Ravana and he flew away in a chariot with her. Sita realized her mistake and began to weep for Rama. But she had been imprisoned anyway. Ravana took her to Lanka and placed her in the beautiful Ashoka grove. A golden chain also is a chain, they say. So though she was in the beautiful grove Sita wasn't happy. There were numerous demons to guard her. Sita's only thought became Rama since then. A hundred golden deers wouldn't attract her anymore. All attractions and insinuations failed to turn her mind to the trap. She now knew that her happiness was only when she would be near Rama. But for him, nothing could bring peace.

According to yoga, the nearer we are to our real Self, the Puruṣa, the happier we shall be. The farther away from it, the greater will

be our misery. Our true nature (*svarūpa*) is the Self or Puruṣa. But the Puruṣa identifies himself with the objects of the world (*vastu sārūpya*) and hence we become bound and miserable. We become bound because we lack the power of discrimination and dispassion, called *viveka* and *vairāgya* in yoga parlance. We don't understand what is right and what is wrong. We overstep the barrier of *buddhi* and do things which we shouldn't. We thus invite suffering. When our intellect becomes clouded we commit mistakes and thus we become trapped in the vortex of this world. This trap is called birth (*jāti*), living (*āyus*), and suffering (*bhoga*). This world may look beautiful like the Ashoka grove of Sita, but is there happiness for us when we are imprisoned? A prison, though made of gold, is still a prison. We identify ourselves with the false 'I' and are far removed from the Puruṣa. We become restless and are eager to put an end to suffering. As Swami Vivekananda says, the vast mass of humanity is very little removed from the animals. We thrive on ignorance. This should change.

The path of devotion says almost the same thing. Our true nature is full of bliss; but why are we miserable? Why are we suffering in this world? It is because of ignorance. Owing to ignorance we hold on to things which we should not; love things which we should not. When we lack discrimination, we overrun our limits and invite trouble. Hence we become bound.

But there is hope. The yoga path tells us that we should restrain our mind. Everything that comes from the world—its experiences, knowledge, sorrows, bondages, etc.—is in the form of mental modifications (*vṛttis*). All our false attachment, therefore, is owing to these *vṛttis*. As yoga says, *vṛtti-sārūpya* will never bring real happiness to us. We shall be happy when we attain to our true nature (*svarūpa*). By restraining our mental modifications, we can control our thought process and make the mind still and calm. When we have only one thought we shall have attained the state of

savikalpa samādhī. We then go nearest to our real nature. So when we understand that we are bound, we shall have only one idea and that is of getting released from bondage here and now.

The devotional path says that when we are caught in the prison of the world, we feel the distress of it and realize that the world does not belong to us. The world is worthless (*anārtha*). Its cessation (*nivṛtti*) comes through holy company (*sādhū-saṅga*), repetition of God's names (*bhajana kriyā*), etc. There are numerous instances to show how inadvertently we become caught in the world, pray to God, and are released from bondage. An elephant, for example, went to the river and was caught by a crocodile. It prayed fervently to the Lord and He saved it. When we understand that we have had enough of this world, that we belong to someone else, that our love for the objects of the world is wrong, we begin to pray earnestly to God. The world's attractions cease to bind us anymore. If we are sincere, our only thought will be how to get released from suffering. Our mind will passionately call upon the Lord.

The Hanuman Episode

In this world no one is to suffer all one's life. Help comes. Now, without tracing the entire route of Rama in his search for Sita, we can go over to land's end from where Hanuman crosses the ocean in one leap. Who was this Hanuman? Hanuman was a great pundit, a sinless person, a pure soul, and an ardent devotee of God. Just as Maricha was Ravana's servant, Hanuman was Rama's servant. But while Maricha came to delude and entrap Sita, Hanuman came to find ways for her release. It is really interesting how, out of the thousands of women all through his way from his native Kishkindha to Lanka, Hanuman could spot Sita in the Ashoka grove. When Hanuman leapt over the ocean, there were some obstacles on his way. Mount Mainaka rose up from the ocean and obstructed Hanuman's path so that Hanuman should rest for a while. But Hanuman said that he was on Rama's duty

and couldn't rest midway. That firmness supremely satisfied Mainaka. The next person to test Hanuman's sincerity was the mother of Nagas called Surasa. She came out of the ocean in the form of a hideous demon and opened her mouth wide in order to swallow Hanuman. The wider her mouth became, the more did Hanuman increase in size. Finally, in one subtle moment, Hanuman decreased his size tremendously, went into her huge mouth and came out. Surasa was happy she was conquered and blessed Hanuman profusely. Then came the real demon, Simhika, who could catch people by pulling their shadows. Hanuman entered her mouth, tore her heart into pieces, and came out. Gods were happy, sages were happy, everyone was happy that Hanuman had won.

Hanuman finally spotted Sita and spoke to her. He consoled her, saying that Rama was coming in search of her, would vanquish Ravana, and release her soon. He gave the souvenir from Rama to her, indicating the truth of his statements. He also burned Lanka all alone to show her that Rama's power was supreme when compared to that of Ravana. He himself wanted to take her to Rama but did not do so.

According to yoga, there are many obstacles on our path to the attainment of our true nature. These obstacles, like doubt (*saṁśaya*), lack of zeal (*styāna*), weakness, etc on the one hand, and attraction and aversion to worldly objects on the other, appear to trouble us. But we should march onward. The sages who have succeeded in the path tell us we should be steady in the path. Master yogis know the pitfalls in the path and so they have left specific instructions. So we should continue. We then understand that, in spite of our present difficulties, release is near at hand.

The devotional path says that when we are suffering and desire to be free from it, help certainly comes. We generally doubt that of the millions and millions of people, will God identify us and help us? But when we yearn for Him, He *will* help. The first help is in the

form of the guru. Who is the ideal guru? He who is a great scholar (*śrotriya*), a sinless soul (*avṛjina*), and a pure-hearted being without any desires (*akāmahata*). Such a guru will come at the right moment if we are sincere and guide us. The guru has struggled hard to attain God in his life. He has realized the truth that God alone is real and the rest is unreal. He will show us both the goal and the way. He will first of all bring home the truth that God or Truth or eternal happiness is real and can be attained. His glorious life is there before us to show how one can overcome obstacles and attain the goal. We generally waste our time in vain pursuits. In his long journey towards the goal, the guru has struggled sincerely and has never relaxed or wasted a moment's time. We can give up everything, we say, but we can't forsake our little egos. The little spiritual practice that we do only increases our ego and we think we are superior beings. However, the guru has reduced his ego or I-ness to a bare minimum and has conquered all obstacles on his way. He has overcome vanity and other vices with ease. It is such an illumined guru who will help us in our struggle to be free.

Saints say that when we are strong in the hope that God is our only goal and that He can be attained, that our suffering and bondage will come to an end very soon, the guru steps out of the way and goes back to God. He gives indications about the reality of God and the unreality of the world, as also the powerlessness of worldly attractions before the power of God, and leaves.

The Rama Episode

At last Rama came. While Sita was panting for release and for Rama, Rama was struggling to reach Sita. 'Have you seen Sita?' he would ask everyone. He would ask the trees, the creepers, the deer, the birds about Sita. Ultimately, he brought a huge army of monkeys to Lanka. He fought Ravana and his army, and routed them. Rama tested Sita by fire before accepting her finally. And thus Sita was released from bondage.

According to yoga, as we concentrate

more and more, as our mental modifications become less and less, the light of the Puruṣa shines more and more brightly piercing through the veil of ignorance. When the *savikalpa* stage is reached, there is the awakening of the knowledge of the difference between the Puruṣa and Prakṛti, called *viveka-khyāti*. This *viveka-khyāti* will lead us to the true awareness of *svarūpa*. The few remnant *saṁskāras*, the last traces of our contact with the world, are all burnt in the fire of knowledge, and burnt seeds (*dagdha bīja*) will never sprout. Thus the jiva is released from bondage. In yoga Īśvara or God also has a place. By adoring Īśvara, we can be released from bondage, says Patanjali. For the millions of thoughts arising in our mind, for the numerous sufferings we undergo, for the countless births we take, the only answer is concentrating our mind. The rest is spontaneously taken care of.

The path of devotion says that God loves us. When we struggle for release from bondage, God Himself comes. As saints say repeatedly, if we go ten steps towards Him, He comes a hundred steps towards us. The more we go towards Him, the lesser will be the power of worldly attractions. Saints say that spiritual life is a progressive passion for God. This passion will burn away all the evil in us. However, with our own power we cannot do much. Rama crossed a hundred-*yojana*-wide ocean to come to Sita and also showed that he had no selfish motives. It shows that God, out of love, is ready to help us if we are sincere. He is *kapāla-mocana*, the remover of suffering. We are bound and can't do much; all we can do is pray, think of Him, repeat His name constantly. God will help us if we struggle even a little. This is what all great saints and sages assure us. Once God's grace falls on us, there is nothing for us to fear, they say. Sri Ramakrishna compares aspiration to the rosy dawn and says that the rising of the sun is not far off. When the sun rises, there is only joy—darkness goes, birds sing with joy, living beings wake up with joy—it's only joy everywhere. □

IMAGES OF INDIA'S PAST

A Great Lady

In a country where wars and feuds, massacres and pogroms were common for some time, there was one person who successfully maintained peace for decades. Khande Rao Holkar's widow Ahalya Bai is a legendary figure in Indian history. She had offered to commit *sati* when her husband died, but her father-in-law had dissuaded her from doing so. She had great works to do, he had said. And so she had reluctantly stayed back. She later assumed charge of the great Maratha empire at a crucial juncture. But owing to her devotion, wonderful ability, strength of character, etc, she ruled over the kingdom undisturbed for more than 30 years. So efficient were the relations which Ahalya Bai established with foreign powers that her territories were rarely invaded during her lifetime. The fond object of her life was to promote the prosperity of everyone around her. Her charities were immeasurable. At all places of Hindu pilgrimage—Jagannath Puri, Dwaraka, Kedarnath, Rameshwar, etc—she built holy edifices, maintained establishments to feed the poor, and sent annual sums in charity. She supplied Ganga water to numerous shrines in south India to bathe deities. She would arrange for the supply of water to farmers at work. She had purchased many fields full of corn to feed birds which were driven away by farmers. This great lady passed away in 1795 (cf. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, ed. R.C. Majumdar, Vol. 8, pp. 269-72).

Link Between Two States

The Senas who ruled Bengal after the Palas originally belonged to Karnataka. In this connection, it is interesting to note that a number of epigraphic records refer to one or more lines of Jaina teachers belonging to the 'Sena family', settled in the Dharwad district of Karnataka. The names of all these teachers end in *-sena*. There is no doubt that the original home of Senas was in the region of modern Karnataka. How could the Karnataka Senas come to settle and wield royal power in Bengal? It appears from the Pala records that Palas employed outsiders. The Senas might also have entered Bengal in the wake of some foreign invasions and established independent principalities (cf. R.C. Majumdar, *History of Bengal*, Vol. 1).

The Ideal of Ahimsa

The famous indologist Hopkins says, 'There is in India a doctrine called non-injury, which in some regards transcends any ethical teaching to be found in Christianity as known in America. It is the gentle doctrine of harmlessness.... This is not a teaching of Christianity, though it has been engrafted upon it and finds expression to a small degree in the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals' (Hopkins, *Ethics of India*, p. 227).

Libraries Till Now: A Survey

D. N. NAGARAJA RAO & J. S. SAINATH

Here is an excellent, thorough and painstaking survey of the entire gamut of the library world. In a single article, Sri D.N. Nagaraja Rao, a library and information services consultant from Mysore, and Sri J.S. Sainath, deputy librarian, Manasa Gangotri, Mysore, have discussed the entire history of the world of libraries in an absorbing way. We thank the authors for this highly interesting article, which will be published in parts.

Introduction

At the bang of 12 midnight on 31 December 1999, the New Year 2000 was born, and along with it, the new millennium. Two millennia of the common era have rolled by. Usually, at the dawn of a new period, we take stock of the progress we have made before embarking upon the opportunities the new period can offer us. It is from this point of view that an attempt has been made here to study how the concept of library originated in society, and how it blossomed out of a mere storehouse of books into a centre for dissemination of information.

It may astonish us, and it is hard to believe now, but the people of ancient and medieval times had rock books, clay tablets, palm leaves, parchments and other methods of communication, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge. These were the only modes of channelizing information until the 14th century, when the invention of the paper technology came about. From such a state to the stage where modern people use telecommunications, this science has come a long way. And the 20th century marks a period of revolution in Information Technology, with the ushering in of the computer, the Internet, etc.

The development of libraries during the last two millennia can be divided into the following four periods: (a) the ancient period, (b) the medieval period, (c) the modern period and (d) latest developments in India.

The Ancient Period

Tangible proofs are available that the concept of library existed in one form or other



Etruscan gold and clay tablets

even in the remote past, as in the civilizations of ancient Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Phoenicia and elsewhere. We find that materials used for recording the scripts differed from place to place and from time to time. Here is a brief survey of ancient libraries.

Sumer: The art of writing was developed about 5000 years ago by the Sumerians, who lived in the cities between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.¹ In their temples were stored the earliest written records of commercial accounts, grammatical exercises for young scribes, mathematical texts, treatises on medicine and astrology, collections of hymns, prayers and incantations. These embryonic libraries were unearthed in the 20th century by

1. Cf. *Collier's Encyclopedia*, Vol. 14, p. 558.

archaeologists.

Egypt: In Egypt the establishment of the first library has been attributed to Rameses II (1304-1237 BC). According to the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus, he established a library of sacred literature in Thebes and placed over its entrance the inscription 'Medicine for the Soul'. In later centuries many temple libraries were maintained there under the care of priests. The inscriptional writings of Egypt are found in four sources: (1) pyramids, (2) underground rock tombs, (3) temples, and (4) obelisks. The outstanding library of this period was the Alexandrian library, which was founded by Alexander the Great about the year 330 BC in the city of Alexandria, the Egyptian capital of the time. Ptolemy I, the successor of Alexander, it is said, founded a library and a museum here. His son and successor, Ptolemy II, advanced the project. He invited scholars to transcribe, translate and compile works of repute, and among them were names of such renown as Josephus and Pliny. As time

passed, the library came to have stock of, in the words of Josephus, 'fifty times ten thousand' works. Though the glory of this library was at its highest, Reynolds points out that 'the career of the great Alexandrian library was not one of perpetual sunshine.'² This great library, according to one account, had 900,000 rolls. Euclid studied here and brought out his *Elements of Geometry*. Here it was that Archimedes evolved his famous principle in the science of mechanics. And there were many other distinguished scholars as well. The contents of the library were mainly in Greek. The destruction by fire of the huge collection of books here was an incalculable loss and certainly one of the greatest catastrophes in the history of scholarship. Even subsequently, fires and consequential destruction marked its history. Some were accidental and caused by nature as in its early days; but later there were others by royal decree!

Babylon: A temple in the Babylonian town of Nippur, dating from the first half of the 3rd millennium BC, was found to have a number of rooms filled with clay tablets, suggesting a well-stocked archive or library.

Assyria: One of the best known of the very early libraries flourished at Nineveh, the capital of ancient Assyria, about 700 BC. This library contained leather scrolls and papyri, but they were destroyed; only clay tablets survived. The tablets dealt with many subjects, including agriculture, government, poetry and medicine. The great monarchs of Assyria, notably Sennacherib, Assurbanipal and Sargon II, were zealous collectors of works on all subjects. Among the works unearthed during excavations at Nineveh were catalogues of a variety of minerals and plants. During the reign of Assurbanipal (668- 27 BC) the library contained about 20,000 volumes and was maintained in his palace at Nineveh to instruct his subjects. Many collections of Assyrian clay of the 2nd millennium BC were found at the



Ramses II with a sacred obelisk.

2. H.J. Reynolds in D.N. Marshall, *History of Libraries* (New Delhi: Oxford-IBH, 1983), p. 20.

Tell el Amarna in Egypt. Assurbanipal, the last of the great kings of Assyria, mentioned an archive of 25,000 tablets comprising transcripts and texts systematically collected from temples throughout his kingdom. The majority carry his name and some historians state that the king had 'edited' them and caused them to be collected in his palace at Nineveh.

Greece: The origin of libraries in the form of collected books is attributed to the Greeks. Most of the larger Greek temples seem to have possessed libraries, and many certainly had archive repositories. Books existed in Athens in considerable quantity before the time of Aristotle. In his time the Greek world passed from the practice of keeping oral records to written records. Aristotle amassed a private library of great importance, to be used for his writings. His passion for learning made possible the great library at Alexandria the most famous one in the ancient world. According to Strabo, a traveller and historian of the first century BC,³ 'Aristotle's library formed the model for that established at Alexandria, and became the greatest in antiquity.' Their collections of papyrus and vellum scrolls are said to have numbered hundreds of thousands. By the 3rd century BC libraries flourished in many cities in Greece.

Pergamum: In Asia Minor, a library rivaling that of Alexandria was set up in Pergamum during the reigns of Attalus I and Eumenes II. Parchment was said to have been developed there because export of papyrus from Egypt was forbidden by Ptolemy Philadelphus. The library was bequeathed with the whole of the kingdom of Pergamum to the Roman people in 133 BC. Plutarch records that Antony gave its 200,000 volumes to Cleopatra, to become part of the Alexandrian library.

Rome: The intellectual vigour that had got extinguished in Greece was rekindled in Rome. Through the Greek refugee-scholars who worked as tutors and teachers in Rome, the Romans became acquainted with the great

stream of Greek literature. The spoils of war brought home by the Roman legions included books, and in this manner the great private library of Aristotle came to Rome. During the golden age of Latin literature (70 BC - 14 AD), private libraries were maintained in the villas of the Romans. There were many private libraries in classical Rome, including that of Cicero. Excavations at both Rome and Herculaneum have revealed that library rooms in private houses were filled with bookcases around the walls.

Early Public Libraries

The credit of the establishment of public libraries in Rome goes to Julius Caesar, who planned the creation of the public library system and entrusted the implementation of his plan to an outstanding scholar and writer, Marcus Terentius Varro (d. 27 BC). Caesar died before his plans were carried out, but a public library was built within five years by a literary patron by name Asinius Pollio (d. 4 AD). Describing its foundation in his *Natural History*, Pliny coins a striking phrase which has application to libraries generally: '*Ingenia hominum rem publicam facit*, He made men's talents a public possession.'

Pollio's example was followed by Emperor Augustus and others, and thus one finds that 28 public libraries existed in Rome at the beginning of the 4th century AD. The example of Rome and its emperors was followed throughout the empire, and every large city, palace, and village seems to have had its collection of books. Some of the private libraries numbered between 30,000 and 60,000 rolls and the owners often kept slaves for the production of manuscripts. Books became so common among the wealthy that the dramatist Seneca ridiculed: ...the Roman who has adorned his house with books hardly reads the titles.⁴

As the ancient pagan culture decayed and Christianity became the state religion, the works of non-Christian Greek and Latin

3. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 10, p. 857.

4. Cf. *Collier's Encyclopedia*, Vol. 14, p. 560.

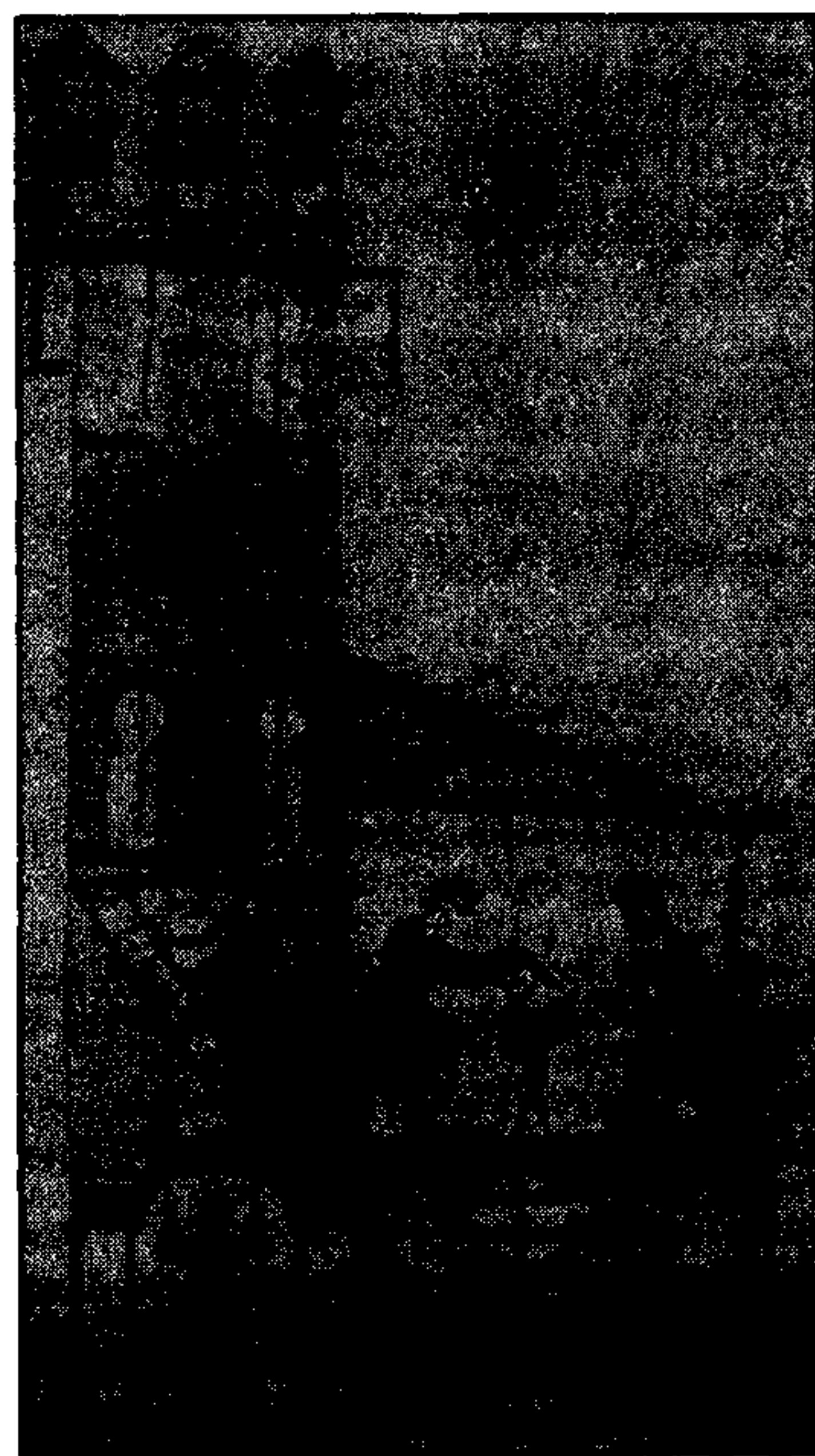
authors were also ignored. Shortly before the pagan cults were forbidden in 392 AD, an observer lamented, 'Libraries, like tombs, were closed forever.' Many of the books in the Roman libraries were ruined due to damp and neglect; others were scattered and wasted through pilfering and intentional destruction. Fragments of the cultural heritage of Greece and Rome were, however, preserved in churches and monasteries, from which later blossomed the culture of the Renaissance.

Byzantium: The imperial library at Byzantium, set up by Constantine the Great in the 4th century of the common era, was an important centre for Christian literature. It played a part in the preservation of the literature of Greece and Rome. In the 5th century, when the Roman Empire was destroyed by the onslaught of Germanic barbarian incursions, libraries, both public and private, went up in flames or were left to decay. It is observed that in the ancient period there was no demand for libraries by the common man. The growth of libraries is primarily seen in palaces and religious centres.

The Medieval Period

After the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century AD, Europe entered almost a thousand years of the Dark Ages. The cultural progress that Rome had made largely disappeared. Libraries in the medieval period were usually in monasteries and cathedrals, which served as links between monasteries and universities.

Church Libraries: Priests and monks became the primary torch-bearers of knowledge, and they, in their own way, kept the torch of knowledge burning until the Renaissance brought in a new era and lifted the dark clouds which hung over Europe. Just as the papyrus roll was the principal 'book' in ancient libraries, the parchment codex was the typical 'volume' in medieval libraries. The codex, or block form of book, was a bound manuscript of several pages, resembling modern printed pamphlets or books. It had advantages over the papyrus roll—greater durability and ease



The scriptorium in the bell tower of San Salvatore, Tavera

of handling. A new monastery obtained the basic liturgical manuscripts from its mother abbey, and the collection grew through gifts, bequests, and the making of copies.

Among the earliest of the valiant group of priests and monks who took up the challenge of the Christian clergy, the name that stands out very prominently is that of Cassiodorus, who founded two monasteries between the years 546-55 AD: Vivarium and Castellum. His object was to provide divine as well as human knowledge to priests, and assure its transmission to later ages. He collected valuable ancient manuscripts and got them copied by his monks. In 535-36, he attempted to found a Christian Academy in Rome but did not succeed and founded a library instead. He prepared handbooks for the libraries for the use of monks, and methodically organized library activities in the monasteries.

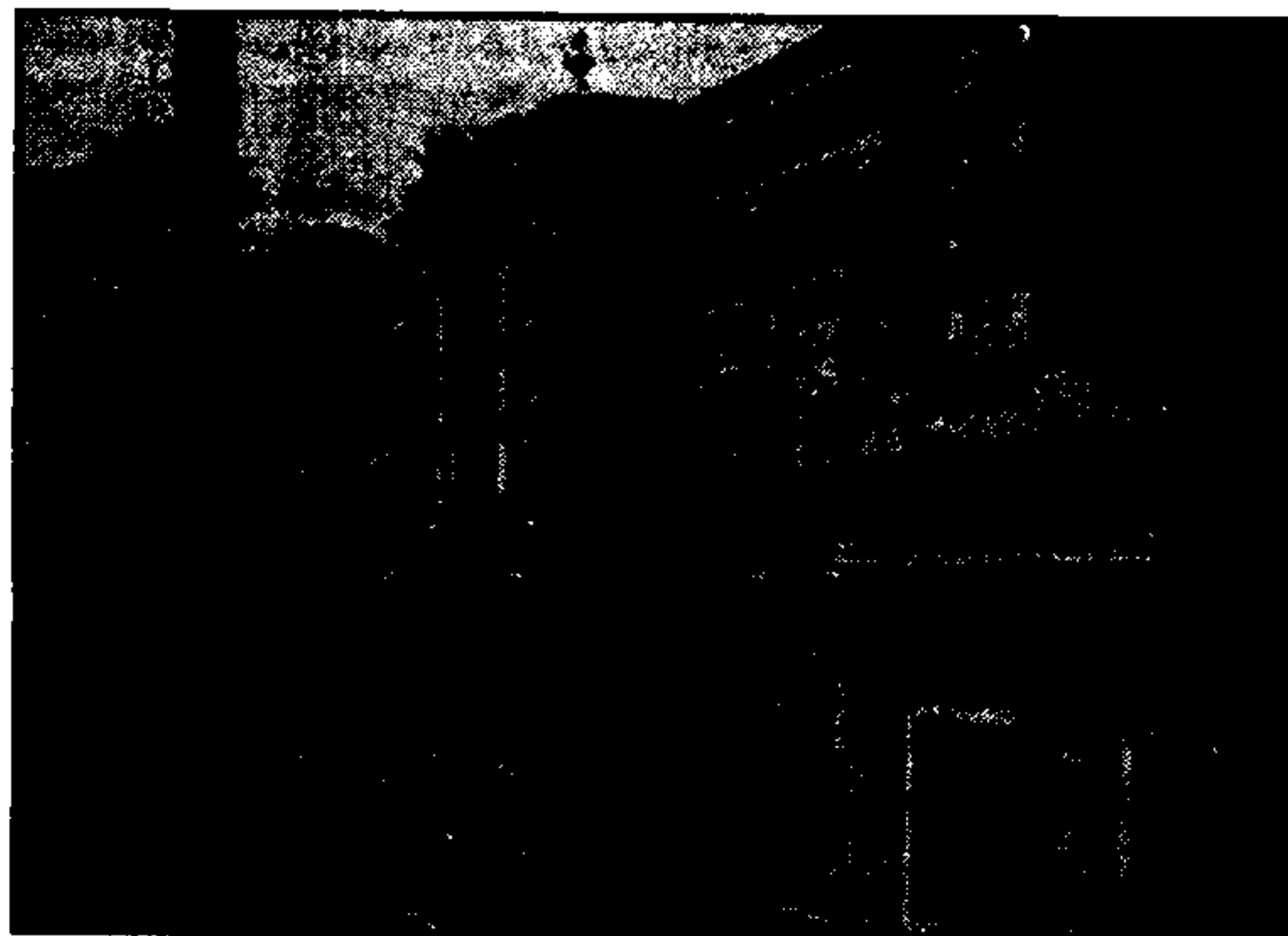
Among the earliest examples of church libraries was a library in Jerusalem, founded

by Bishop Alexander, a priest. This library has been described as a storehouse of historical records. The world is indebted to St Benedict (the founder of the Benedictine order), for initiating modern library methods. The rules that he laid down early in the 6th century indicates the concern of this Christian saint for the pursuit of knowledge and the preservation of books. A library became an almost integral part of a monastery, particularly one belonging to the Benedictine order. In this order, there was unusual dedication to the development of libraries. We have, for instance, the monastery at Monte Cassino in Italy, which was founded by St Benedict in 529 AD and which, throughout its career, enjoyed considerable fame for possessing a very valuable library. The Augustinians and the Dominicans were also great lovers of books and their libraries ranked second only to those of the Benedictines.

In the midst of the Dark Ages, the reign of the Frankish emperor, Charlemagne (742-814), stands out so far as books and learning is concerned. Charlemagne himself gathered a personal library of note. Important works in Italy and Spain were copied for Charlemagne's library.

Among the scholars attracted to Charlemagne's court was the distinguished English monk, Alcuin (735-804). Alcuin had developed the monastery library at York, England, into one of the best libraries in Europe, and had become renowned as a religious leader and teacher. Alcuin said that if a library and scriptorium were established at any given place, a school would naturally grow up around it. Later, Alcuin became the abbot at St Martin of Tours, and there he established a model library for a religious institution. He made his church library something of a source collection, where authorized texts of the Bible and other religious works were kept for copying by anyone who could visit or pay for a copyist.

Charlemagne's grandson Charles the Bald preserved his palace library, and even



The Vatican Library in Rome

added works to it. After his death the feudal wars and Viking invasions that swept much of western Europe destroyed most of the schools and libraries that Charlemagne had founded. Closely akin to the monastery library was the cathedral library that developed largely after the 11th century. The cathedral library at Canterbury in England is said to have had more than 3000 volumes in the 12th century, which is said to have been fairly large for its time. The dominance of monastery libraries diminished during the later medieval period. Trade and manufacture developed in the cities, where a rising middle class required books for instruction and amusement. The professional men and civic leaders in the town owned small collections of books. The existence of cities made it possible for teachers and students to meet together, and these circumstances gave birth to universities. Professional and academic libraries sprung up in towns and cities as part of universities. In the 11th and 12th centuries the monasteries of Germany and central Europe, especially those at Fulda, Corvey, St Gall and Regensburg, were active in building and preserving libraries. In these institutions, which were generally schools as well as monasteries, the position of *librarius* (librarian) became established as the custodian of books. In considering the intellectual history of medieval Europe, the Muslim civilization in Spain and Portugal should not be ignored. Following their conquest by Muslims

in the 8th century, a highly developed civilization emerged, and cities such as Toledo, Seville and Cordova became centres of learning.

University Libraries: The University of Cordova in the 10th century was one of the three great Moslem universities, and there were lesser colleges at several other Spanish cities. No less than 70 important libraries were reported in Spain between the 10th and 13th centuries, many of them brimming with rare and beautiful books. Book collectors, both official and private, obtained their literary treasures from as far away as India and England.

By the late 12th century, however, Muslim civilization in Spain was on the decline and there were political and religious leaders who ordered that books be destroyed and banned, writing being contrary to the prevailing religious beliefs. Later, wars between Christians and Muslims in Spain destroyed still more books and libraries. By the 16th century, when King Phillip II was gathering material for a royal library, he found that all Arabic books in Spain had been destroyed.

The development of the medieval universities in the 12th and later centuries changed this pattern and raised the level of learning in western Europe to a point where the Renaissance could begin. The university idea spread throughout all of Europe, and by 1500 there were some 50 or 60 of them, scattered from Spain to Scandinavia and from England to Poland. In the absence of infrastructure like buildings and other library facilities, each teacher would possess a collection of books that he could lend or rent to his students. As the universities grew in size, they usually came to be divided into colleges, and it was in these colleges that the earliest academic libraries were founded. It became usual for each college to provide books for its students, and wealthy alumni often donated to the collections. By 1322, the Sorbonne library had over 1000 volumes, and by 1400, this library was housed in a separate building, with a main reading-room measuring 12 feet by 40 feet. In addition to the early universities in Paris and

Italy, other notable ones with important libraries were those at Cracow (1364), Prague (1366), Heidelberg (1386), Oxford (1412), and Cambridge (1425). Among other notable English libraries of the 15th century was the Guildhall Library, founded in London about 1425. This library resulted from a bequest of the Lord Mayor Richard Whittington.

As the Middle Ages progressed and declined, a number of important private libraries came up in various parts of Europe. Despite the scarcity of books and the smallness of libraries, the cultural centres of the Middle Ages did bridge the gap between the ancient and the modern worlds. Whether in monastery or cathedral, university or bookshop, a representative proportion of the classics was preserved despite the rages of wars and times. There is much that we do not know about Rome and Greece—and about medieval Europe—but we would know much less if it were not for the influence of medieval libraries in preserving books. The western world owes an eternal debt of gratitude to the scholarly monks, the princely book collectors, and the industrious copyists who preserved the records of the past.

Islamic Libraries: One of the important developments during the early part of the 7th century was the rise of Islam in the history of the world. Medieval libraries of Europe were influenced in their development and progress by the Islamic world.

In the Muslim world, Damascus, Baghdad and many other cities had libraries by the 13th century. Medieval libraries flourished in Arabia, Persia, central Asia, Egypt, northern Africa and Spain, under the influence of Islamic culture and civilization. Over a period of seven centuries, Islamic libraries served as real cultural centres. Arabic learning shone with an effulgence all its own. Seeking knowledge from wherever possible, the Arabs utilized the cultural heritage of the nations with whom they came in contact. In their libraries they recreated by translations and otherwise a vast storehouse of lore and learning, wit and

wisdom, and an appreciation and understanding of the arts and sciences of the ancient world of Greece, Persia and India.

All these libraries, despite the vicissitudes of time, provided a channel through which the ancient classical learning, eclipsed by the Dark Ages for a period, renewed itself and flowed into renascent Europe. Revival of learning in western Europe was due to a great extent to the impact of the cultural heritage stored in these medieval Islamic libraries and which flowed out through translations of Arabic works into Latin. A host of translators, engaged in translating Arabic works in various fields of knowledge at centres such as Monte Cassino and Tivoli in Italy, and Toledo and other centres in Spain, made available in Latin to the western European scholars the Arabic learning in astronomy, optics and physics, chemistry, medicine, mathematics and philosophy. And thus developed western scholarship which led to the Renaissance and the modern age.

Broadly speaking, Islamic libraries can be divided into four categories: (i) royal libraries, (ii) mosque libraries, (iii) public libraries, and (iv) private libraries.

Royal Libraries: Among the imperial libraries, the most famous ones were: the imperial library of the Abbasids in Baghdad, the library of Fatimid caliphs in Cairo, the Umayyad library at Cordova in Andalusia (Spain), the Chaghatai library of Abu Said (1424-69), grandfather of Babur, at Samarkand, and the imperial libraries of the Mughals in India. The first library at Baghdad was established during the time of Harun. He initiated a scheme for an academy styled Beit al-Hikmat or Dar al-Hikma with a library attached to it. His successor, Mamun, followed up the scheme and developed the library. The library was open to scholars from all over the world. This served as a model library for the Islamic world. Based on this model at Baghdad, academies and residential universities came into being, consisting of a library, a translation bureau, an observatory, a medical col-

lege, study halls and hostels for students. The library was the hub of the complex and librarians held important and responsible positions. In building up the famous library of Beit al-Hikmat, Caliph Mamun made special efforts to seek out the works of ancients; he sent a deputation to the contemporary Byzantine emperor to obtain scientific and philosophical books in Greek for translation into Arabic. J.W. Thompson, in his *Ancient Libraries*, writes: 'During Mamun's regime, literary relics of conquered provinces, which his generals amassed with care, were brought to the foot of the throne as the most precious tribute he could demand. Hundreds of camels might be seen entering the gates of Baghdad laden with no other freight than volumes of Greek, Hebrew and Persian literature.' Libraries grew in numbers. In Baghdad itself there were 36 libraries and every important city had a library. These famous libraries continued to exist for 600 years, till the time of Mohtassim, when the city was ransacked by the Mongols in 1258 AD.

Almost equal in fame to the Baghdad libraries was the academy founded by the Fatimid rulers of Egypt at their newly established capital in Cairo in 1005. The then caliph, al-Hakim, founded an academy styled Dar al-ilm or Dar al-Hikmah. As in Baghdad, the institution combined the functions of a free educational institution and a free library. Here, priceless literary treasures were collected. The building was attached to the royal palace and contained study rooms and meeting rooms as well. The collection was very substantial, the Holy Koran alone accounting for about 2,400 illuminated editions. Besides a number of rare manuscripts, autographed copies of renowned literary figures were also found. The third great royal library of medieval Islam was that of the Umayyad caliph, al-Hakim II (961-76), at his capital in Cordova. This caliph was an enthusiastic book-lover. He sent special scouts to Alexandria, Cairo and Baghdad to scan the book markets there for rare volumes. He is said to have collected no fewer than 400,000 volumes at a time when

printing was unknown and every copy had to be transcribed laboriously by hand. The University of Cordova, a splendid library, became the leading centre of learning in the western world, particularly rich in mathematics, astronomy and medicine. This shows in unmistakable terms what influence a library has on the status and standing, worth and value of a university. Islamic Spain had over 70 libraries of note. The cities of Cordova, Seville and Granada, which were under Muslim rule for several centuries, rivalled with each other in the magnificence of their academies and libraries. The Cordova University library was at the time deemed the largest in the world. Its catalogue ran into 44 volumes. Cordova was famous also for its book bazaar, an emporium where scholars from different parts came to scout for books. At Dar al-Hikmat in Cairo, rare books from the royal treasury were made available to scholars and there was a sort of inter-library loaning system also. But in some cases, books were issued only on a requisite security.

Mosque Libraries: The mosque library served as a depository library. Shops of booksellers were often found around the principal mosques and there were scholars, men of letters and copyists who frequently visited them, and they became centres where cultivated people met. The most notable mosque was at Toledo in Spain, the fame of which as a centre of culture had spread far and wide. Here were gathered together scholars and scribes of repute—Arabs, Jews and Christians from all countries. The most prominent among the scholars was Gerard of Cremona, who translated 71 works of Aristotle, Ptolemy, al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and others on science and art—all from Arabic into Latin before he died in 1187. So also Michael Scot, a translator employed by Emperor Frederik II (1194-1250), settled in Toledo and translated numerous works in medicine and physiology from Arabic into Latin.

Public Libraries: There were public libraries liberally scattered over the Islamic king-

doms. In Baghdad alone, no less than 36 such libraries were destroyed in the course of the Mongol invasion in the year 1258. J.W. Thompson records that every important city in Persia had its library. Nishapur, Ispahan, Ghaznah, Shiraz, Merv, Basrah, Mosul and many other cities had famous book collections open to all, and those who were poor were given free paper. There is a record of the existence of ten libraries in Merv at the time of the Mongol invasion. In Basrah, the public used the famous library of Ibn al-Siraj, which was destroyed later.

Private Libraries: In the annals of Islam, royal personages were not alone among book-lovers and patrons of learning. Innumerable instances of private individuals, cultivated in the arts and with a passion for library pursuits, can be cited. A few examples: Al-Jihad (776-868), one of the most prominent literary figures, was a voracious reader and had a large library of his own. The books that he loved so well and studied so deeply brought about his end. One day, he was working surrounded by piles of books. Suddenly the books came down upon him. Already suffering from paralysis, he succumbed to the injuries. Al-fath ibn Khaqan, a favourite of Caliph al-Mutta-wakil (842-47) also had a private library and his magnificent collection was open to scholars. Ali ibn Yahya had a private library at a palace near Baghdad which he threw open to students; he also provided paper and ink for their writing. This library, known as Khizanat al-Hikmat, attracted scholars from various countries. At Cordova, Abu al-Mutrif (d. 1011) possessed a collection of rare books and employed six copyists of his own. There is also the recorded instance of Ibn Hibban of Nishapur bequeathing to his city a house with 'a library and quarters for foreign students' and providing, at the same time, stipends for their maintenance. There were a few who were not interested in the contents of the books but were only book collectors. The Arabs of the time cherished books with affection and looked upon them as endowed with personality and

pulsating with life.

Libraries in China

In China, the first libraries were established by the Ch'in dynasty, when one copy of every book in the empire was placed in an imperial library and all other copies (with certain exceptions) were burned. In the 1st century of the common era the Han dynasty imperial library had 677 works (of which 47 survived), divided into six categories. The Sui dynasty library (7th century AD) had over 5000 titles and divided its holdings into 4 categories: Confucian classics, philosophy, history and belles lettres. This division was used until the 20th century. The Sung dynasty saw the invention of movable-type printing, and both inexpensive books and large private libraries existed for the general public until after the fall of the Ch'ing Empire in 1911.

During the later Middle Ages the dominance of monastery libraries diminished. Trade and manufacture developed in the cities, where a rising middle class required books for instruction and amusement; the professional men and civic leaders in the towns commonly owned small collections of books. The existence of cities made it possible for teachers and students to meet together with regularity, and these circumstances gave birth to universities, which in turn needed books and libraries. While professional and academic libraries were being formed in the towns, books of light verse and romance were collected in private libraries of the nobility.

The Impact of the Renaissance (1400-1700)

The learning of the Renaissance found nourishment in ancient cultures, but the modern mind broke with the past and looked towards the future. Experimental science had its beginnings in the 17th century with Galileo in Italy and Bacon in England, and critical history was born at the same time in France. Scientific and learned societies were established, and scholars in one country entered into exchange of information and publications with those of another. This new order of intellectual activity

with the specialization, systematization, and cooperation that still characterizes Western scholarship gave to the library a new direction and purpose. For the first time, libraries were founded to advance the work of scholars; the 'first functional research library in modern times, the Bodleian at Oxford University,' was opened in 1602.

The faith in logic and science set forth in the 17th century found even more adherents in the 18th and to this was added the philosophical notion of perfectibility of man. The ills of the world, according to the beliefs then current, could be cured through education and thus universities and libraries increased in importance. The library at the University of Gottingen was founded with a realization of its potential contribution to the work of the institution. This library was administered throughout the 18th century, and at the end of the period the collection numbered 200,000 volumes. Students from all over the world who studied at Gottingen learned of the dependence of scholarship on excellence of library. Paul Saenger states that 'the history of Renaissance is inseparable from the history of its books and libraries.'⁵ The expansion of knowledge within the scholastic tradition, the secularization of society, and the rekindling of interest in ancient history, literature and art placed new demands on both books and libraries from 1400 to 1700.

The intellectual achievements of the Renaissance were as complex and varied as the kinds of books and libraries that the Renaissance period produced.

1. Renaissance libraries included university libraries, since the universities founded in the Middle Ages greatly expanded during the Renaissance, and new universities with new libraries of scholastic texts were created.

2. Other Renaissance libraries were religious libraries, established to serve the new reformed orders that spread during the pe-

5. Cf. *ALA World Encyclopedia of Library and Information Services*, 1980, p. 474.

riod. These libraries also contained rich collections of scholastic literature.

3. Still other Renaissance libraries were courtly (or royal) libraries assembled to preserve the new vernacular literature that expanded particularly in France under the patronage of King Charles V and great noblemen like Jean Du Berry and in England under the patronage of King Edward IV.

4. Other Renaissance libraries were humanist libraries, assembled by Italian humanists and their lay and ecclesiastical patrons to preserve the manuscripts of the newly recovered ancient texts.

5. Finally, Renaissance libraries can be said to have included theological libraries formed chiefly from printed books to serve the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter Reformation. Despite their remarkable variety, Renaissance libraries reflected a single and common phenomenon: A rise in the rate of literacy, set in the context of a moderate increase in the number of people who were able to read and write, and who therefore sought to use books and to avail themselves of libraries. In the 12th century only a small, chiefly monastic, elite were able to read and write, and literate people constituted a tiny fraction of the general population. By 1533, Thomas More estimated that over half of the population of England was literate in the vernacular. The rate of increase in literacy accelerated at the end of the 14th and during the 15th century. During the Renaissance, Europe was transformed from an oral culture, with a population primarily of listeners, to a population that included significant numbers of readers.

Renaissance Libraries: Throughout the Renaissance the largest libraries were the university libraries. Sorbonne, for example, already possessed over 1700 volumes in 1338. They were the early Renaissance forerunners of public libraries and were centralized in halls equipped with benches and tables. In the mid-16th century Europe's largest and oldest libraries still were manuscript collections.

Frederic Duke of Urbanio was said to have been proud that he had only handwritten books and no printed books.

The destruction of monastic libraries during the Reformation added to the dependency of Protestants on printed sources. They, who used the printing-press effectively to communicate their ideas, frequently presented copies of their works to libraries. In Geneva the academy of Calvin had only printed works because of the law of copyright deposit of 1530, an important aid in building the library. Amongst the Catholics, the Jesuits who were leaders in the Counter Revolution had no manuscript collection of their own and were particularly active in building large libraries of printed books and in increasing the level of bibliographic expertise. At the end of 16th century the Jesuit Library (Paris) is said to have numbered 20,000 volumes, an outstanding figure when compared with libraries of the previous century.

The Impact of Printing (1444/1480/1500 AD)

The invention of printing by movable type in 1444 AD must be viewed in the light of the growing interest in western Europe for standardized books. The invention has traditionally been attributed to Johann Guttenberg of Mainz. Before Guttenberg, printing was used in textile decoration, illustrations and short texts. However, these processes did not play a major role in book production. It is important to note that the earliest printers came from outside the group of artisans directly concerned with manuscript book production. Guttenberg was a goldsmith. True to the profession, the trend of making things look ornamental also seeped into printing, making it a high-cost one, though it presented an aesthetic appearance. The first printed books were often printed on vellum. Early printed books were illustrated with hand-printed miniatures and decorated with floral borders identical to those in contemporary manuscript codices. Only after 1480 did printers, many of whom were former scribes, begin to produce

cheap books. By 1500 printing had become an important source of cheap university textbooks and most of the titles printed were works of proven value that had been previously disseminated in manuscript. However, in the early 16th century there emerged a new clan of authors who wrote keeping both the press and the readers in mind. Printing had an enormous impact on the content of Renaissance libraries. Standardized and uniform books ultimately led to standardized collection. This led to standardization of texts and the definition of corpus of ancient and medieval authors. Bibliographies like those prepared by Conrad Gesner were meant by their authors to serve as standardized library catalogues of printed texts. Printing standardized the bibliographical base of 16th century culture. In addition to the changes in techniques and technology, intellectual and social changes played a major role in determining the physical appearance and content of Renaissance books and libraries.

In Italy humanism was of enormous import. 'Humanism developed outside the universities, which had been responsible for the greater portion of book production, in the 13th and 14th centuries,' writes Paul Saenger.⁶ In general, the early humanists were not university-trained experts in theology, medicine and law, but laymen, often notaries, trained in the tradition of the *ars dictaminis*. The early humanists shared a common goal in the restoration of eloquence in Latin prose. They avidly collected the oldest possible manuscripts of classical authors and had them copied in order to build libraries of ancient texts in their original form, free from corruptions in the orthography and grammar introduced by the medieval scribes.

The Impact of the French Revolution (1789-99)

It is observed that except the collections of Bibliotheque Mazarine and some others of the 13th and 14th centuries, which were avail-

able only to scholars, men from the public had no access to books. Most of the libraries in France before the revolution were private libraries. The first network of public libraries was established after the French revolution whose cry of liberty, equality and fraternity spread to the realm of knowledge. Property that had belonged to the aristocracy and to the church, including numerous individual libraries, was confiscated, which became the nuclei of a widespread public library system. Clerical properties were put at 'the nation's disposal' on 2 November 1789, and some months later the property of emigres and of persons condemned by the terror was sequestered. Abbe Gregoire in a report to the convention dated 11 April 1794 evaluated the total number of confiscated books at 10,000,000; there also were about 26,000 manuscripts. There was a contradiction between the intentions of the authorities and their methods. The revolutionary project was to set up libraries to serve as 'schools for all citizens' but the collections confiscated from the nobility and the church mainly consisted of works on theology, jurisprudence, and ancient literature—not what was required for popular adoration. Inertia prevailed, however, and the public library system that could have come into being failed to do so. Libraries were oriented towards conservation and learned studies. No acquisition policy came to balance the enormous mass of ancient documents for which the public authorities were henceforth responsible. At the end of the revolutionary period many large libraries in France still had not been catalogued, and they were often concerned about ensuring the security of their collections than increasing them or opening them to the public. The librarians of these collections, so rich in history, literature, and theology, were bound to look toward the past—the paradoxical heritage of the French Revolution. This predominating influence of the past was the most striking feature of French public libraries until the 20th century.

(to be continued)

6. Ibid., p. 475.

Reminiscences of the Golden Moments

SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

On the occasion of the birth anniversary of Swami Abhedananda, which falls on the 22nd of this month, we present selections from his memoirs of his master, Sri Ramakrishna. These reminiscences show the glowing character of Abhedanandaji also.

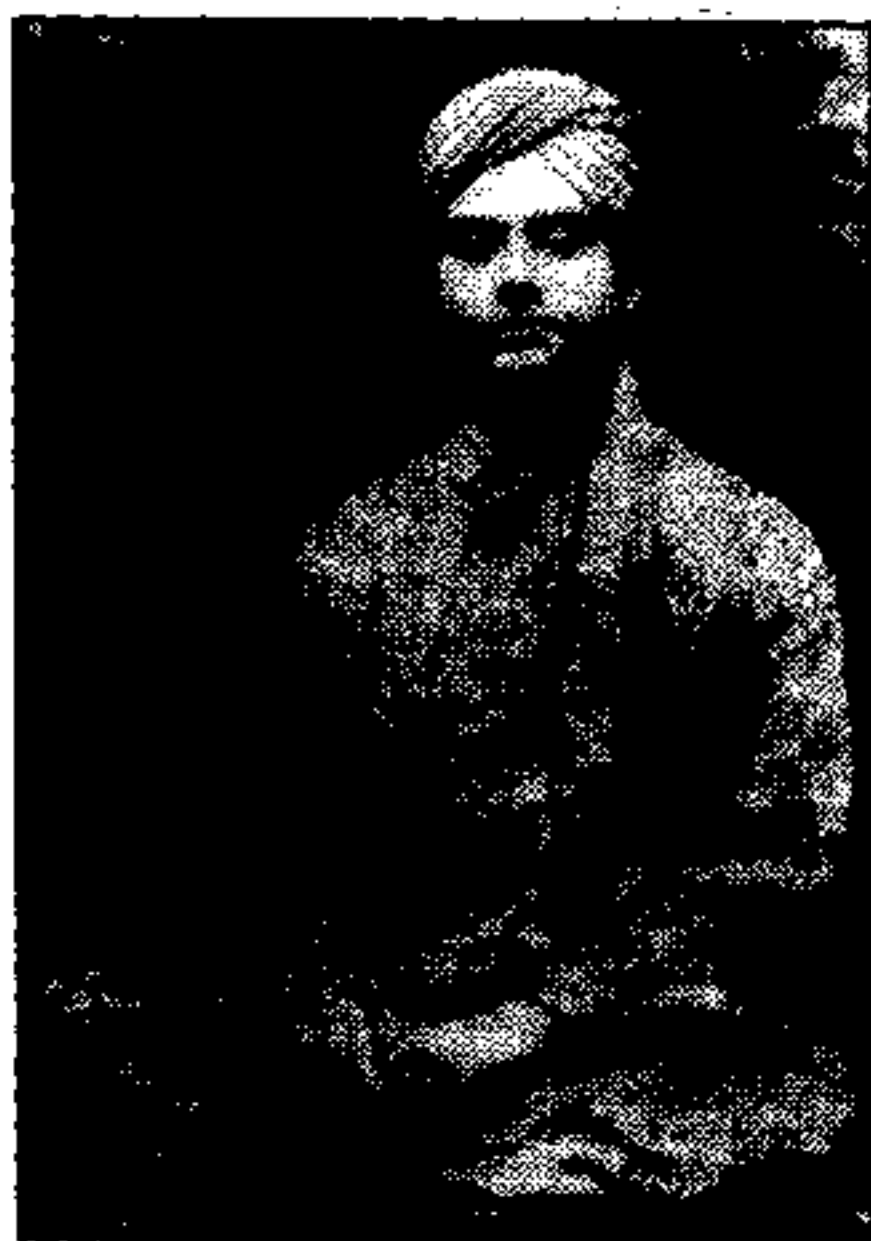
Whenever I went to Dakshineswar I would give personal service to the Master. I would really feel immense bliss in my heart to hear the teachings of the Master. When in ecstasy, he would sometimes laugh, sometimes cry, sometimes dance, and sometimes go into samadhi. Again at other times he would joyously sing. Occasionally he would sing kirtan, depicting Radha and Krishna's divine play in Vrindaban. Sometimes while describing the divine play of Rama and Sita, he would, like the great saint Tulasidas, float in an ocean of bliss. The spirit of the harmony of religions was reflected in Sri Ramakrishna's everyday life, and he constantly taught his followers the liberal, universal message, 'As many faiths, so many paths.'

Ramakrishna also used to teach us to chant 'Haribol, Hari-bol' [literally, 'chant the name of the Lord'] loudly while clapping our hands. When somebody asked him the reason for clapping one's hands, he said: 'As the birds on a tree fly away when one claps one's hands loudly, so the sinful thoughts of the mind go away when one chants God's name while clapping one's hands.' Every evening in Dakshineswar the Master would sit on his bed facing the north and repeat 'Haribol, Haribol' while clapping his hands. Sometimes he would say 'Hari is my guru, my guru is Hari,' 'O Krishna, O Krishna,' 'O Govinda, you are my life and soul.' Then he would go into ecstasy. In that

state he would importune Mother Kali, but his words would not be audible to us. Watching his God-intoxicated state we were amazed.

Ramakrishna taught us to practise japa and meditation every morning and evening. About meditation, he sometimes referred to his naked guru Tota Puri's illustration, telling us, 'Tota used to say that if a brass water pot is not cleansed every day, stains accumulate on it; likewise, if the mind is not cleansed by meditation every day, impurities accumulate in it.'

[One day Abhedanandaji's father came to Sri Ramakrishna and requested him to send the boy back home because his mother wept bitterly for her son. Ramakrishna immediately sent the boy home.] With tears in her eyes my mother asked me to have supper and to stay for the night. But within half an hour I



felt uncomfortable at home. I felt as if I were in hellfire. My heart was restless and thoughts of the Master haunted me. I tried to control my desire to run away from home, but failed. After hurriedly eating some refreshments, I said goodbye to my parents and returned to Cossipore. I told the Master when he enquired me: 'I went with the idea of staying at home tonight. My parents also begged me to stay. But I felt great agony while I was there. My mind longed to return to you. ... My mind was pacified only after arriving back here.' Parental affection seemed insipid compared to the Master's pure love. □

Journey into the Third Millennium

DR SAMPOORAN SINGH

There is news that the United Nations Organization has convened a Millennium Summit on 6-7 September 2000. We hear, as we go to press, that the Indian Prime Minister will attend the Summit. The aim of this Summit is to consider the challenges facing humanity, and to find out what the UN can do in this regard. As the Secretary-General of the UN, Mr Kofi Annan says: 'The Millennium Assembly offers a timely opportunity for the world's leaders to look beyond their daily concerns and consider what kind of United Nations they envision and will support in the new century.' Dr Sampooran Singh is a well-known figure in the field of the study of the interaction between science and religion. He has several works to his credit. In this paper, which Dr Singh has despatched to the Secretary-General of the UNO, he stresses the vital need of a Vedantic approach to life for a better future.

Introduction

At the dawn of the third millennium, the need for a scientifically sound basis for the radical transformation of the human psyche has become more pronounced. The Parliament of World's Religions, which met in Chicago in 1993, noted that 'there will be no better global order without a global ethic.' In a statement signed in April 1993 by 1670 scientists from 71 countries, the Union of Concerned Scientists said: 'A new ethic is required ... (an ethic which) must motivate a great movement, convincing reluctant leaders and reluctant governments and reluctant peoples themselves to effect the needed changes.' Ervin Laszlo, an eminent scientist, wrote: 'Since time is short and the choice pressing, a conscious formulation of a scientifically based ethic (purification of the human psyche) is high priority; it is needed to accelerate the discussion, and ultimately the acceptance, of a suitable set of criteria for guiding individual and social behaviour.'¹

The evolutionary process of the universe has two fundamental characteristics: first, the progressive expression of more and more

complex and articulated structures and forms of matter, and second, higher and higher expressions of consciousness, or greater and greater manifestations of the infinite Self within. That means, it is the evolution of matter and expression of consciousness at higher and higher quantum energy potentials. The energy potential, in philosophical language, involves richness and variety, depth and range. Philosophy states that consciousness is fundamental. Many eminent scientists too have opined that consciousness is fundamental and matter is a derivative. It suggests that all biological evolution is an expression of consciousness. It appears that life is an unfolding of consciousness. So our journey has been from the spiritual down to the physical, and therefore, the goal is to transcend physical evolution, pass through the biological and the psycho-social to reach the spiritual.²

Just as there is the evolutionary process, there is also the urge to discover the source of this evolution. Both science and spirituality are traversing along the path of discovery. Most functions are related to finding the unity

1. Ervin Laszlo, *Moral Criterion on an Endangered Planet* (Adyar: The Theosophical Society, 1999), p. 2.

2. *The Survival of Mankind and Quantum Jump from Violence to Peace*, ed. Sampooran Singh, (New Delhi: Books India International, 1999), p. 136.

behind diversity. The mind-body spectrum functions predominantly in three modes. First, the scientific mode. It explores time-space matrices, gathers experience and relative knowledge, and stores them as memory. Second, the psychological mode. Historically speaking, human evolution in the waking state of consciousness has been conditioned by an unbroken saga of challenges and responses. All activity is destructive, leading to a great deal of misery, confusion and sorrow. Third, the religious mode. It's the meditative state which deals with the real behind the unreal, the basis of memory, the universal core of religion; it explores the wholeness of life and bestows absolute intuitive wisdom.

Fritjof Capra, an eminent physicist, summarized the challenges in the following words: 'We have high inflation and unemployment, we have an energy crisis, a crisis in health care, pollution and other environmental disasters, a rising wave of violence and crime, and so on. ... These are all different facets of one and the same crisis, and this crisis is essentially a crisis of perception. ... What we need, then, is a new 'paradigm'—a new vision of reality, a fundamental change in our thoughts, perceptions, and values.'³

When we enquire into the facts of life and the trans-psychological truth behind these apparent facts, we come to a state of enquiry into the absolute ground of our being, the ground of our existence. This enquiry may be called an exploration into 'planetary ethics', or 'ecological ethics', or a symbiotic union of science and spirituality. It is a harmony of the dynamics between the human mind-body system and the rhythm or order of nature. While science undertakes an outer voyage, the spiritualist undertakes an inner voyage of self-discovery: from self-observation through self-knowledge to silence. Understanding comes only through self-knowledge, which is the awareness of one's total psychological process. Under-

standing brings about a compassionate feeling towards life. We explore to bring about an integrated individual who is capable of dealing with life as a whole.

The journey to the third millennium must be sustained by nature both in its manifest and unmanifest aspects. It implies that there should be a deeper understanding of the wholeness of life, or that a symbiotic union of science and spirituality should guide the difficult journey.

The Function of Science

Science explores the objective world. It constructs a technological world. Science deals with a part of the whole and so leads to fragmentation and conflict. When it comes to individuals, we live in two worlds: the technological (outer) world and the psychological (inner) world. We consider the two as independent.

Science is based on experiments and works predominantly in the rational mode of consciousness. It is predominantly the function of the intellect. It measures and quantifies, classifies and analyses, and thus constructs an intellectual map of reality. That is, it constructs a system of abstract concepts and symbols, characterized by a linear and sequential structure which is typical of our thinking and speaking. The intellectual map of reality is a symbolic map of knowledge; it is dualistic knowledge. It cannot give the knowledge of unity. There may be newer inventions to perceive the source of evolution. But invention in the technological field means to modify the known techniques; that is, it is an improvement on the existing methodology. So it is a movement in the field of the known. The new discoveries, the new theorems, etc are, unless trivial, of course first *discovered* and then proved. A discovery or intuition is an expression of truth in nature hitherto *apparently* unknown to man. Discovery is an inspired *truth*, a flash of insight. It is not a step-by-step process but it happens when there is a quantum jump from a conceptual frame of reference to a non-conceptual frame. Yet, it has its own

3. Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point* (London: Wildwood House, 1982), p. 324.

limitations.

Thus science gives us objective knowledge or the knowledge of the world of experience, revealed through the senses. In the words of Eddington, it 'gives us only knowledge of structural form and not knowledge of the content.' Great thinkers of science tell us that science gives us only a conceptual, short-hand report of what is in the universe, but we are far away from reality.

The Limitations of Scientific Observation

The famous biologist T.H. Huxley once wrote: 'Sit down before the fact like a little child and be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever and to whatever abyss Nature leads or you will learn nothing.'⁴ Fritjof Capra observed that 'all the difficult economic, environmental, social, political and human problems are really different facets of one and the same crisis, and that crisis is essentially a crisis in perception.'⁵ He underlined the quintessential importance of the 'art of seeing' as a basic prerequisite to effective problem-solving. That is, we need a holistic vision of reality. Lehmann wrote: 'The demand for more and more observation and experiment implies a warning to both physicists and biologists: do not trust pure imagination; do not lose yourself in wild speculations in meta-physics and meta-biology which tempt you to transcend the limits of possible experience.'⁶ Gilbert Blane wrote in 1819: 'Observation and more of observation, on the actual working of the conservative and restorative principle in health and disease, is the foundation of medical science.'⁷ E.F. Schu-

macher said, 'Our task is to look at the world and see it whole.' David Bohm said, 'The new form of insight can perhaps best be called *Undivided Wholeness in Flowing Movement*.'⁸ Prigogine stated that 'the behaviour of a reality (is) unrelated to our beliefs, our ambitions, or our hopes.'⁹ Erwin Schrodinger stated, 'A moderately satisfying picture of the world has only been reached at the high price of taking ourselves out of the picture, stepping back into the role of a non-concerned observer.'¹⁰ David Bohm concluded that 'to observe nature with a certain kind of objectivity could be called the germ of scientific attitude,' or scientific temper. He believes that 'the most significant implication of science is ... that it teaches us to look at facts in an unbiased way, whether we like it or not, and that it is meaningless to do otherwise. ... Such a scientific spirit is necessary, not only in what is commonly called "scientific research", but also in art and every phase of life.'¹¹ It requires a tremendous courage to look at thought with a scientific attitude, which implies to see without interfering in its flow and without any energy interaction. This suggests that the criterion of observation is that the thought-time does not interfere in observation and the real observer acts as a 'witness' or non-concerned observer. When all is said and done, science has its limitations.

Consider the words of a spiritual man. J. Krishnamurti says: 'Is it a shock to discover that your brain, your mind, and your knowledge are valueless? All your examinations, all your struggles, all the things that you have gathered through years and years, centuries,

4. Quoted in Ken Wilber, *The Holographic Paradigm and Other Paradoxes* (Boulder: Shambhala, 1982), pp. 15-6.

5. Fritjof Capra, *Uncommon Wisdom: Conversation with Remarkable People* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), p. 232.

6. F.M. Lehmann, 'Two Kinds of Natural Science' in *The Scientific and Medical Network Newsletter*, August 1993, p. 17. [Hereafter, Lehmann.]

7. Lehmann.

8. David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1983), p. 11.

9. Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *Order out of Chaos* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984), p. 5.

10. Erwin Schrodinger, *What is Life & Mind and Matter* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 145.

11. David Bohm in *New Scientist*, 11 November 1982, p. 364.

are absolutely worthless? ... What you have done or not done is absolutely of no value. ... So there is only one thing, and that is to discover that all that I have done is useless—ashes!¹²

The Three States of Consciousness

We began with the evolutionary process and went on to show how science has observed this universe. We also saw the limitations of the solely scientific basis of studying evolution.

G. Spencer Brown said: 'Thus we cannot escape the fact that the world we know is constructed in order to see itself. But in order to do so, evidently it must first cut itself up into at least one state which sees, and at least one other state which is seen. In this severed and mutilated condition, whatever it sees is only partially itself.'¹³

Consider the individual. The 'I' is the centre. From there the 'not-I' or object arises. And thus the relationship between 'I' and 'not-I' is born. The subject, the experiencer, is the centre. The centre is always eternal. The centre may project itself into the future, but it has its roots in the past. Psychologically there is only 'what is'. Because we are not able to solve 'what is' we invent 'what should be'. This 'what should be' creates duality, conflict and adds to the conditioning of the psyche. Where there is duality there is fragmentation. The fragmentation is 'me' and 'you' and the conflict is in that relationship. Thought is born when there is interaction between this 'me' and 'you'. During the interaction between the objective and the subjective in the waking state of consciousness, we gather a great deal of experience and knowledge. This knowledge is stored up in the brain as memory. Memory is a by-product of thought. Thought expresses itself as a by-product of the interaction be-

tween the subject and the object, the experiencer and the experienced.

The individual experiences three states of awareness: waking, dream and deep sleep. In the waking state there is always fragmentation and duality. This causes a sort of disorder in the brain-activity. The brain cells demand order, otherwise they cannot function. The order or disorder in the brain does not mean duality of the brain cells. The waking experiences and the memory consequent to them cause disorder in the brain. The effect of this is clearly visible in the dream state where the mind is in disorder. In the deep sleep state the waking and dream states are in abeyance and so the frame of reference is quiet. A few quantas of spiritual energy flow to the brain and keep it in order. So generally everyone feels fresh and rejuvenated when we awaken from deep sleep. The problem is how to integrate the experiences of the waking, dream and deep sleep states. The integration is necessary because the three are not different but the expression of one and the same consciousness. Along with integration, there is the need of transcending the three states. It is then that 'what is' is perceived. Science, in its present state of affairs, cannot help us integrate the three states or transcend them.

The Functions of the Mind

The dynamics of behaviour in the psychological field are experiencing, knowledge (gathering of information), memorizing, and reproducing. The state of attention gives a new dynamics to behaviour—direct perception, understanding and spontaneous action. In the psychological mode of mind, the subject of cognizance is recalled memory. We have to learn to observe a thought without interfering with its flow. We have to be aware of our own inward activities, watch what we are thinking and never let even one thought escape without observing its nature or source. This implies that memory becomes the subject of cognizance. When we are observing and enquiring into a fact, there is no conflict in the mind but there is division. When we become absolutely

12. J. Krishnamurti and David Bohm, *The Ending of Time* (London: Harper & Row, 1985), pp. 105-10.

13. G. Spencer Brown, *Laws of Form* (New York: Julian Press, 1972), pp. 104-5.

attentive all conditioning disappears, all the image-building comes to an end, and having no image implies that there is then no division. This leads to an important conclusion that the thinker is the thought, the seer is the seen, the observer is the observed. This frame of reference, where there is no division between the observer and the observed, is called the non-dual or non-symbolic frame of reference.

When the state of observation is sustained over a long time it is called the state of attention. The influence of attentiveness is to increase perceptive sensitivity of the individual; it is a higher level of perception. As one moves from the state of observation to the state of attention, or to the state of concentrated awareness, the mind makes a quantum jump from the lower to the higher quantum energy potential. The state of attention is synergistic to the state of observation. This attentiveness, called concentration, grows finer and finer and there comes a time when thought and time end—there is total insight. This state of attention bestows self-knowledge. The state of absolute attention implies that you do not react, or evaluate, or compare the observed thought with something else. You are all by yourself. The 'what is' alone exists and nothing else. Now, how do we attain to this state of absolute attention? It can never happen through science. What is the other way then?

The Function of Meditation

Meditation is not a psycho-physical activity; it is not the vibration of the unconditioned energy. It is the state of total lack of vibrations of the conditioned and unconditioned energies, which is the substratum of existence. It is a state of benediction.

To meditate is to discover and find out the meditator, ie, the pseudo-subject, the 'I-ness'. To find out the meditator is to end it. The entity, the 'I' which says 'I must find God or Truth', can never do it. The intellect, being limited, cannot realize what is limitless or eternal. The highest realization the intellect can have is to realize that it is limited and conditioned, and that it is incapable of realizing the

Truth. This is the supreme realization of the intellect, and realizing this it becomes silent and still. The total silencing of intellect is the ending of the meditator. The end of meditation is the flowering of love—love for the Truth.

Meditation, therefore, is seeing 'what is'. It is not merely a repetition of words, nor the experiencing of a vision, nor the cultivation of silence. It is a state in which there is an effortless and choiceless awareness of what life is within and around. Thus it is a state of being, not of activity. Meditation is a way of total living. Life is simple 'is-ness'. The boundaries of race, country, religion, and the frontiers of time and space—all are absolutely irrelevant to true life and living. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary to have the pure, smokeless flame of enquiry, which is the urge to find out, to discover, to learn; it is an adventure to find out what the true meaning of life is for the joy of it. In such a motiveless state is the beginning of discovery.

We discussed the three states of existence. Meditation is the relaxation experienced in profound sleep during the waking hours. It is an effortless awareness of the sleep and the waking hours together. The hours of waking and deep sleep are unitary because they do not become two different dimensions. Thus meditation deals with the wholeness of life.

In the state of meditation, the holo-vibration or the Fundamental Vibration ('perceptive intelligence' or 'perceptive sensitivity') goes into abeyance by itself. In the realm of meditation, there is neither awareness nor the holo-vibration of the pure cosmic energy. It is sheer lack of vibrations, and one lives in unperturbed peace, free of sounds and words.

Levels of Perception

The universe is hierarchically structured: it has an immanent potential (the wholeness that is expressed as the objective world), and also a transcendent potential (the wholeness of 'what is'). This wholeness can be described as both immanence and transcendence. This wholeness, again, is the ground of our exist-

ence.

The common waking state is a display of past information fused with present sensory data. When we observe the time-space matrices, or the explicate order, many other levels of perception are revealed, and each level of perception represents a quantum energy potential or a higher frequency realm of consciousness. The mind-brain-body spectrum shows that the universe is a gigantic hologram with each part being in the whole and the whole being in each part. For easy comprehension, we may divide perception into five levels, which are as under:

1. *Mutilated Perception*: The waking state of mind cannot perceive the fact of the created world but perceives the mutilated fact; so it is called mutilated perception. It is the fragmentary perception of the intellect.

2. *Perception of the Fact*: Perception of the fact means seeing the fact of the created world, the observed fact without the pseudo-observer. It is a perception of values and meanings. It is born in the state of observation and gets finer and finer in the state of attention.

3. *Total Perception*: Holistic perception dissolves the fact. Total perception brings complete knowledge of the created universe as it is, and also brings an awareness of something beyond. It is the knowledge of a thing as it is, and hence it brings joy with it. Holistic perception implies that the mind is totally free, totally detached from everything that man has put together. It implies awareness of the wholeness.

4. *Perception in Meditation*: In the ocean of Silence, the vibrations of cosmic energy begin to be perceived. Meditation brings us to a higher level of consciousness where the cause of creation is perceived vaguely. It is the state where from 'what should be'

we reach the threshold of 'what is'.

5. *Perception of 'What is'*: This is the ultimate state where the Truth is perceived. No science or other means can take us to this Truth. It is the absolute state of Unity, of no vibration, of Brahman.

Concluding Comments

Only Truth can liberate the mind from its ideation. Awareness is the perfume of enquiry while sensitivity is the road to Truth. The perception of Truth leads to mutation of the psyche. Truth is the goal of self-discovery, so man has to be a light unto himself.

We have to undertake self-enquiry in which the movement of mind as thought and action are revealed. This will lead us to insight (intuition) and spontaneity of action, and that will transform us. The exploration of the symbiotic relationship between science and spirituality gives greater meaning to perception. Only science or only spirituality cannot perceive the wonders of evolution fully. Their union permits the Life Immeasurable to operate upon us. This will enable the human race to build up an economy for peace, friendship, brotherhood, and oneness. Mankind cannot resolve its challenges unless we make a quantum jump to total perception.

A true lover of mankind is free from the limitations of time, free from the burden of the past, free from the limitations of action. Love is not different from Truth. Love is that state in which all psychological imbalances go into abeyance. Living in love and compassion implies living in Truth, in absolute communion with manifest Truth, which is nature. If even half a dozen people perceive this wholeness, the 'what is', they will release a tremendous high frequency energy into the orbit of global human consciousness. The universal awakened consciousness will then govern the globe and make it a paradise to live in. □

Reminiscences of Swami Akhandananda

SWAMI AMALANANDA

Swami Amalanandaji, who passed away some time ago, was head of our Belgharia centre. His reminiscences of his guru, Swami Akhandanandaji, have been translated from Bengali by Dr Sasanka Bhushan Bandyopadhyay, former secretary of the Vivekananda Society, Calcutta. Swami Akhandanandaji was born on Mahalaya Amavasya, which falls on 27 September this year.

During my school days, I came to know from a monk of the Ramakrishna Order that young Gangadhar (later Swami Akhandananda) used to practise austerity, meditation and japa since his investiture with the sacred thread. One day he met Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, who showed him Shiva—nay, Consciousness itself—at the Dakshineswar temple and said that one could not have a clear idea of God without seeing the majestic mountains and the vast ocean. When the happy days with Sri Ramakrishna were over, Akhandananda travelled to the Himalayas and then over the plains of western India either all alone or at times with Swami Vivekananda. His innate desire for serving God in man was kindled by Swami Vivekananda and it took a definite shape first in the form of his remarkable service to the illiterate poor of Khetri in Rajasthan, and later in his service to the famine-stricken people and orphans at Mahula, Sargachhi, in the Murshidabad district of West Bengal.

Inspired by such a life, I as a school boy felt an urge for getting initiated into spiritual life by this God-man. So from my school hostel at Majdia in Nadia, I wrote to Swami Akhandananda, who was then living in his Ashrama at Sargachhi. He replied on 8 February 1934: 'I cannot say anything without [making] some acquaintance with you. You are not far from

this place. Why not meet me here?'

Before long, on a winter evening of the dark fortnight of the moon, I alighted from the train at the Sargachhi station and walked in company of a group of unknown men who promised me that they would show me the way leading to the Ashrama. When the path appeared to be never-ending even after a long walk, and when from the topic of their conversation it appeared that my companions belonged to a gang of dacoits, I somehow slipped away from them unnoticed and hid myself in the jungle for some time. Then I realized that I had strayed from the proper path to the Ashrama. I soon saw a light at a distance in the jungle and, upon reaching it, saw three or four hutments with



some men sitting around a dying patient. When I asked them about the location of the Ashrama of Swami Akhandananda, the Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Order and a direct disciple of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, there was no response. I then enquired of them: 'Do you know a monk who lives here, gives medicines, and nurses cholera patients?' Immediately, all of them said in one voice: 'Do you mean Dandi Baba? Then what were you saying so long? Dandi Baba is well known to us. If you want to go to the Ashrama, we can take you there. One of them took me to the Ashrama, leading me along the path with a

lighted lantern. I owe unbounded gratitude to those people who rescued me from the fear of death and put me on the path of a glorious life on that dark night. I too shall address Akhandanandaji as Baba here.

I gradually understood that Dandi Baba was a special name characterizing the life of Swami Akhandananda. Villagers did not know him as the Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Order; they knew him as their fatherly Dandi Baba and their great benefactor in times of distress. He was to them a father in the true sense of the term. From him the local orphans received affection and benign protection as from one's own father.

On reaching the Ashrama I saluted Baba. He was greatly pleased, and I too was relieved of the anxiety which had overpowered me an hour earlier when everything about me seemed dark. When I came to him after a wash, I found others too had assembled around Baba, who was saying: 'By way of training the young disciples, Sri Ramakrishna would say, "Do you know how to pray?" and then he himself would throw out his hands and legs, crying like a child with the words: "Mother, bestow on me jnana, bestow on me bhakti, I do not want anything else; Mother, I cannot live without you; Mother, I cannot tolerate separation from you for even a moment."' Then looking at me Baba said: 'Pray to God for pure intellect (*suddha buddhi*) and also pray that this be your last birth.'

In the Ashrama I found five or six orphan boys—Gopal, Khoka, and others. They were growing up under the benign care of Baba. From morning till evening, Baba would look after them, himself work in the garden and fields with a spade, go with his alms bag to the affluent householders of Berhampore town to enable him to arrange for the education and training of the orphans, the neglected, and the poor, and to get them established in life. Baba used to cut jokes with the boys and reprimand them as well when necessary. To him the orphans were the most intimate ones, nay, his cherished deity, Narayana. I learnt that when

Baba was in good health, he used to bathe these boys uttering the Vedic mantra, *Sahasraśirṣā puruṣaḥ*..., normally chanted while bathing the deity Narayana during ritualistic worship.

One of the orphans, Gopal, was too naughty. So Baba kept a constant watch on him. That year Gopal was suffering very much from itches all over his body. So Manida (later Swami Annadananda) used to wash the sores with neem-treated hot water. The resulting pain would make Gopal all the more restless and he would throw up his hands and feet in the air, hitting Manida in the process. Manida, however, would not mind, and would continue his service until it was complete. This news reached Baba in no time. That day, Baba sat remorseful and could not have even a moment's rest after his lunch, and was saying to himself: 'Gopal, you have kicked a monk! Do you know its effect on your future!' After a while he called Manida and said: 'Gopal has kicked you. Please be good enough to pardon the stupid boy. Do one thing, buy one and a quarter rupee worth of *batasa* (sugar cake) from Beldanga and strew these around the *tulsi* grove in the name of Lord Hari.' I was overwhelmed with emotion finding a Vedantic sannyasin, who had at one time climbed several peaks of the Himalayas, now propitiating Hari—as an ordinary father would do for the good of his son. Such was Baba's fatherly affection.

In May 1934, on the Kumbha Tritiya day, I was initiated by Swami Akhandanandaji at Belur Math and received his blessings and spiritual instructions. This moulded my life and ultimately led me to the monastic order. In a letter dated 27 March 1934, he advised me to spend some time at Sargachhi during the summer vacation. I followed his direction. This benefited my inner and outer life immensely since it gave me the rare opportunity of being in intimate contact with my guru and to be of some service to him round the clock.

During the Durga Puja vacation of 1934 also I was at Sargachhi, and witnessed and

heard of many incidents:

It was Durga Puja. On the *shashthi tithi*, after the vespers, when we had assembled around Baba, he said: 'Last year, on this *tithi*, I was at Belur Math. At night, Swamiji roused me up from sleep and said, "Where are my clothes for the Pujas? No longer can I bear the smell of naphthalene." Immediately I woke up Nilkantha, the *pujari*, and new clothes were put on Swamiji. Know that Swamiji still lives in the Math.' I could fully understand the inner meaning of these words only when I had the opportunity of serving Baba on a later occasion, while he was at Belur Math. The President's room at Belur Math of those days was near Swami Vivekananda's room (to the west of Swamiji's room) and had no attached bathroom. At night, Swami Akhandananda would go to the bathroom at the north end of the terrace, passing through a small room, avoiding the passage by the side of Swamiji's room lest Swamiji should feel disturbed.

On the same day, Baba raised another topic: 'I told Thakur (Sri Ramakrishna), "Puja is near at hand, all are rejoicing, but no such thing is noticeable here; the boys are ill." Do you know what Thakur said? He said, "I have kept you here for serving the people suffering from famine, pestilence and sickness. This year misery, poverty, lamentation are raging all around. You do not have the means of extending help to the people of these places. How could you speak of having joy amongst yourselves, while others are plunged in misery!" These words of Thakur did put me to shame.' It was not easy for me to understand the meaning of the divine communion.

On the Mahashtami day, after his bath, Baba was reciting from the *Chandi (Durga Sap-tasati)* in a clear and loud voice, oblivious of the time of the day. It was the custom for monks, brahmacharins, and even the boys, to take sacramental food after Baba had partaken of it. They were all worried about Baba's health too. When it was past one o'clock, Upendra, who served Baba, told him that the boys were still without food. Baba immedi-

ately said: 'The boys are without food! Why did you not tell me earlier? Go, make hurry, bring my meal.' This is how he felt immensely for the boys.

On the Vijaya Dasami day, a memorable event took place, which revealed to me his mode of looking upon the villagers as gods in human form. Most of the Hindu and Muslim villagers had assembled in the Ashrama during the evening *arati* ceremony of Sri Ramakrishna. After the *arati* they were waiting in the open courtyard for *prasad*. Govinda Maharaj (the *pujari*), after placing a big tray full of sweets before the image in the shrine room, was engaging himself in *pranayama*, *japa* and meditation in the process of offering them to Sri Ramakrishna. Govinda Maharaj was taking an unusually long time, and Baba was sitting on the veranda, waiting for the *prasad*. From time to time I was sent upstairs to bring down the *prasad* as soon as the offering was over. Each time I reported back that the process was still incomplete. The third time, Baba said in an aggrieved tone: 'To whom is Govinda offering the sweets? Verily Sri Ramakrishna is residing in these people. Go, bring the tray of sweets.' I went upstairs and told Manida of Baba's order. Manida was doing *japa* on the veranda by the side of the shrine. With his consent, I took the tray of sweets away very quietly so that Govinda Maharaj remained absolutely unaware of the action, and placed it before Baba. Thereupon Baba called the villagers one by one by name, and gave one sweet to each. Ah! What a manifestation of joy I noticed on Baba's face! The scene is still vivid before my eyes. In the shrine, Govinda Maharaj was amazed to find on opening his eyes that the tray missing. He came down anxiously, only to find that Baba was distributing the *prasad* in a joyous mood. At the end of the day, when Govinda Maharaj came to know that I was instrumental in bringing down the tray, he rebuked me.

I remember another event concerning a Bhagalpuri brahmin, who worked as a cook in the Ashrama. His cooking was indeed won-

derful! Grains of rice would remain hard and uncooked, and in the *dal*, cereals would not mix with water at all. One day, a member of the Ashrama (probably Govinda Maharaj), who was late in returning from Berhampore owing to the late running of a train, was taken aback to find that his meal was kept uncovered. It had dried up and flies were enjoying it. Naturally, he rebuked the cook using harsh words. After a while, the cook lodged a complaint with Baba. During the post-*arati* meeting, when we sat with Baba in the hall, he spoke on Swamiji for an hour and then, picking up the evening's incident, rebuked Manida, though he was not at fault. It seems that Manida, being the most favoured disciple, had to bear the brunt of the reactions to most of the wrong-doings in the Ashrama. Again reverting to Swamiji, Baba said: 'How much did Swamiji feel for the poor and the grief-stricken. And you are after depriving the poor man of his job.' The brahmin of Bhagalpur continued to work in the Ashrama for a long time thereafter.

During Baba's lifetime I had a few more occasions of serving him, since being a student it was not possible to come to Sargachhi very often. This was compensated somewhat through regular correspondence with him, first from the Hindu Hostel in Mazdia, Nadia district, and then from the Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Gauripore, Calcutta. These letters were to me a source of great inspiration and I was amazed to find that Baba was so full of concern for me. My success in the examinations made him happy; on my getting scholarships for pursuing studies, he was filled with great joy; and he wrote that

there was no need to send him even a small sum of money, when I myself was in need of it. Rather, he would be happy at my success in school/college examinations, that was all. In generalizing it, he wrote once: 'In this way, by Thakur's grace, be successful in all the examinations of life.' Some extracts from these letters are relevant to everyone:

- (1) Never think of yourself as low or guilty.
- (2) Silent prayer is, generally, more efficacious.
- (3) Recollection of, and reflection on, His name may be carried on at any time of the day. Alteration of the time of *japa* is not harmful. Don't worry.
- (4) Very pleased to learn that you have arranged for serving *prasad* to 'the God in man' during the Saraswati Puja at your school. Pray that Mother accepts your earnest puja and blesses you with success in all the functions in this connection. By God's grace, may your welfare be assured and may you have more and more *bhakti* and *sraddha* day by day.

After my school days were over and I was to begin my college career, Baba was instrumental in getting me an accommodation in the Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home at Gauripore.

During the later period of his life, whenever I had the opportunity of serving him, I found that he would often remain unmindful of worldly affairs, looking steadily at something at a distance or singing in a low and sweet tone. The advent of Sri Ramakrishna was for the establishment of peace on earth; and his associate, Swami Akhandananda, dedicated his life to the manifestation of that great ideal in practical life. □

Be quite sincere and straightforward, and never be crooked. Your heart will expand along with your sincerity and straightforwardness. Be always open and above board in all your dealings; never play at hide and seek. Straightforwardness is a great virtue.

—Swami Akhandananda

RELIGION AND LIFE

Swami Bhuteshanandaji's Answers to Questions

The questions and answers being serialized in these columns are not meant to be scholarly expositions of various issues. People from different walks of life used to meet Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj daily during his tenure as President of the Ramakrishna Order, and discuss with him their problems and doubts; and Revered Maharaj would clear their doubts in a characteristically simple way. These questions and answers were recorded and read out to him before he approved them all for publication.

What is the meaning of the word *prāṇa*?

That ~~vital~~ force which keeps us alive is *prāṇa*. It is a power which makes our sense organs function. Sometimes *prāṇa* is referred to as *ātmā*. *Prāṇa* can be termed both as animate (*cetana śakti*) and inanimate (*jada śakti*) depending on the context. When you say *prāṇa* is an organ (*indriya*) it is inanimate. But when you say that all power is working behind it, it is animate. The *Praśna Upaniṣad* in particular and many Upanishads in general discuss *prāṇa*. Swamiji too has discussed it in his *Raja Yoga*.

Who is eligible to experience *mahābhāva*?

These are all very high experiences and Sri Ramakrishna has mentioned that Radha and Gauranga had this. It is difficult for us to understand all these.

What experience did Mirabai, the great saint, have?

Mirabai was immersed in the ocean of God-consciousness. And this is God-realization.

What is the significance of *Om*?

Om is the designation or the symbol of the Supreme. *Om* is that from which this universe has been created, in which it exists, and into which it is to merge. *Om* is called the symbol of Brahman and its repetition takes us to Brahman.

Etadhyevākṣaram brahma

etadhyevākṣaram param;

Etadhyevākṣaram jñātvā

yo yadicchatī tasya tat.

—*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 1.2.16.

The meaning is: This sacred syllable is indeed the symbol of *akṣara brahman* or the everlasting Spirit. This is indeed the Supreme and the everlasting. By knowing this everlasting One or *Om*, whatever one desires will be his. Again, this Upanishad says,

Etadāmbanam śreṣṭham

etadāmbanam param;

Etadāmbanam jñātvā

brahmaloke mahīyate.

—*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 1.2.17.

That is, holding on to the repetition of *Om* is the best of all practices. This support is the highest support. Knowing this symbol one attains the highest.

Why do we worship the image?

In ordinary sense the image and *Īśvara* are not one. But if we look upon the image as *Īśvara* Himself, the effect of image worship and worship of God is the same.

Please tell us something about the *jyotirlingas*.

The *jyotirlingas* are *jyotirmaya lingas*, symbols of Siva in luminous form. There are only twelve *jyotirlingas* and not more. These *jyotirlingas* can be self-born (*svayambhū*) too. That is, they are not installed by human beings but are born of themselves. It is said that Vishwanatha

in Banaras, Kedarnath, Chandranath in Bangladesh, and also Baidyanath in Bihar, are *svayambhū liṅgas*. A *liṅga* is a symbol or sign or emblem of God. When something is described through example rather than by direct means, that is called a symbolological way of presentation. The *liṅga* is the representation of God, as for instance the *sāligrāma śilā*. Now, as I said, there are twelve *jyotirliṅgas* and great spiritual centres have sprung up around them. Just imagine how many sadhakas have performed sadhana in such places!

Maharaj, I could not attain what is eternal. What is wrong if I hold on to what is called the evanescent?

The whole world is doing the same thing: it is called compromise. They say, just because I could not attain the eternal, why should I give up the small, ephemeral joys of the world? Sri Ramakrishna gives the instance of a warehouse: 'The grain-dealer stores rice in huge bags in his warehouse. Near them he puts some puffed rice in a tray. This is to keep the rats away. The puffed rice tastes sweet to the rats and they nibble at it all night; they do not seek the rice itself. But just think! One seer of rice yields fourteen seers of puffed rice! How infinitely superior is the joy of God to the pleasure of "woman and gold"!' [*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 385]. Most people remain content with temporal pleasures. They feel, when sensory pleasures are well within reach, why go for the unseen transcendental bliss?

What should householders do?

Householder devotees would ask Sri Ramakrishna that as they cannot give up everything and seek God, what is the way for them? Sri Ramakrishna would tell them: 'Why should you give up the world? Since you must fight, it is wise for you to fight from a fort. You must fight against your sense-organs, against your hunger and thirst. Therefore you will be

wise to face the battle from the world' [*Gospel*, p. 627]. Sri Ramakrishna advised the devotees to perform all household work with the awareness that God alone is their own and that everything else is impermanent. He further advised them to remain unattached to household attractions. He would also give the example of sixteen annas which make a rupee, and say that one must give fourteen annas to God and the rest for household work. Constant awareness of God will take the mind to Him alone.

Conflicts abound in our lives whereas there is no conflict at all in planets, stars, etc. Why is it so?

You simply are not aware as to how many stars and planets collide with one another and get destroyed, spreading into space as tiny particles. How much do we know about this universe? Sri Ramakrishna would say, 'Is the universe so little?' Who knows how many stars, suns and galaxies there are? Many are yet to be discovered and identified. Who knows how many suns have burned themselves out! The sun which we see today as radiating so much heat will slowly lose its energy and will finally become so weak that it will not be able to radiate its light at all. There are black holes and black holes. How many solar systems have become extinct and how many new ones are being formed and are yet to be formed! Can we ever imagine how many layers of nebulae are there yet to be traced and singled out? The astrophysicists of the world have surveyed the boundless expanse beyond nebulae and have admitted that their knowledge is limited. So we do not have any idea of the infinite universe. Conflicts are there everywhere. There will be no conflict when there is inner peace.

—compiled by *Smt Manju Nandi Mazumdar*

Swami Vivekananda: Is He a Philosopher?

DR J. L. SHAW

Dr J.L. Shaw teaches philosophy at the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. In this article, to be published in parts, he argues from several angles to show effectively that Swami Vivekananda was a great philosopher.

Introductory

The aim of this paper is to establish that Swami Vivekananda was a philosopher. In the course of my discussion I shall mention some of the distinctive features of Vivekananda's philosophy and compare some of his concepts with those of other philosophers. I would also like to focus on his concept of harmony, oneness, morality, the law of karma, and liberation (*mokṣa*).

Some thinkers have lamented that Vivekananda has not been recognized as a philosopher by scholars in India. I think that the reason is our dependence on the views of western philosophers. Since the western philosophers have not yet recognized him as a philosopher our scholars have not paid much attention to his philosophy and it is not introduced at the graduate or undergraduate levels. The reason why the western philosophers could not recognize Swamiji as a philosopher is that he has introduced new categories for solving some of the problems of philosophy of religion, ethics, and metaphysics. Beginning with Plato the traditional western philosophy is concerned with a series of dichotomies such as (1) reason and faith, (2) thought and extension, (3) universal and particular, (4) essence and accident, (5) form and matter, (6) actual and potential, (7) clear and confused, (8) active and passive, (9) thought and experience, (10) understanding and sense, (11) rational and irrational, (12) linguistic and non-linguistic truths, (13) concept and precept, (14) you and I, (15) God and man, (16) appearance and reality.

Sometimes trichotomies have been intro-

duced in place of dichotomies. Since Swami Vivekananda has cut across these dichotomies, the western philosophers have failed to appreciate the importance of his idea of oneness which has been introduced in several contexts. As a result, western philosophers could not realize his importance and his techniques for solving some of the age-old problems of philosophy, especially the problems of philosophy of religion and ethics.

With this introduction I would like to mention some of the concepts of Swamiji and their relevance for suggesting new solutions to the problems of philosophy.

Methods of Finding Unity

Swami Vivekananda has claimed in several places that 'Vedanta is not antagonistic to anything.'¹ To quote Swamiji: '... the Vedanta philosophy stands at the background of all these various sects, and there is no fight and no antagonism between Vedanta and any other system in the world.'² Since Vivekananda's 'oneness' can resolve all sorts of moral, social and religious conflicts, let us discuss this concept in the light of other theories for resolving various types of conflicts.

In the history of our civilization, several attempts have been made to resolve the conflicts from different standpoints. We come across one such attempt in the Vedas. The conflicts between *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa* have been resolved by arranging them

1. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), Vol. 8, p. 122. [Hereafter *Complete Works*.]

2. *Complete Works*, Vol. 1, p. 388.

in a hierarchical order. In this context it is to be noted that *dharma* includes our duties towards human beings, animals, and nature at large. Here it goes beyond the standard western ethical duties. According to the Vedic method, *artha* and *kāma* are subservient to *dharma* and the latter will lead us to *mokṣa*, which is the ultimate goal of life. This method may be useful for reconciling the conflicts between matter and mind, or between mind and Spirit, but not between different religions or sects of the same religion or between different working-classes or castes.

The second method is to be found in the *anekāntavāda* (manifold views) of the Jaina philosophers. According to this theory there are many facets or aspects of reality and each of them is true from a particular point of view. This method may be useful for resolving some of the disputes in epistemology, metaphysics, or philosophy of language. By applying this method in the context of perception one might claim that the same coin is round from a particular perspective, elliptical from another. But this method cannot be applied to resolve all types of social or political disputes. Discrimination or exploitation on the basis of colour, creed, race, or country of origin can never be justified from any standpoint.

We come across another method in the philosophy of Nagarjuna, a Mādhyamika or Sūnyavādi Buddhist. According to him each view or thesis leads to a contradiction and thereby is false. So we cannot claim that one view is superior to another, or inferior to another. All of them are equally false or contradictory. In contemporary philosophy, Kripke has made a similar remark about any philosophical thesis. The basic shortcoming of this method is that it cannot be applied to settle social or political disputes, or the disputes in our day-to-day life.

The fourth method claims that a dispute can be resolved if each of the conflicting views is considered as a means to the realization of the same goal. This method might work with respect to some issues in religious practices,

rituals, or ceremonies, and with respect to different paths for the realization of the ultimate goal of life. This method also cannot be universalized to settle all types of conflicts. It cannot work if the paths or the views for the realization of the same goal are not morally valid or good. Moreover, if there is a dispute with respect to the goal itself, then this method cannot be applied to resolve it. For this reason it is not comprehensive enough to settle all types of disputes.

All the four methods mentioned above have their origins in classical Indian philosophy. Another new method for resolving disputes between philosophies may be found in Hegel's dialectic. The conflict between thesis and antithesis is partially resolved at the higher level of synthesis. But the initial synthesis gives rise to another antagonism which is partially resolved at the level of another synthesis. This process goes on until the Absolute or the Infinite is fully realized. Some of the countries such as the former Soviet Union have applied this method at the social and political levels, but without much success. Moreover, it is difficult to justify how truth can be achieved from a contradiction which is obviously false.

Swamiji's Method of Synthesis

Now I shall discuss Swamiji's method of resolving different types of conflict. His method may be called 'oneness', or 'one in many', or 'unity in diversity.' The following points need to be noted:

'That which exists is one, but sages call it by various names (*ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti*).' This statement of the Vedas, this idea of oneness, is the implicit goal of all religions. Since the same goal is present in every religion, all religions form a unity and the apparent differences are diverse aspects of the same goal. The goal is the freedom from suffering and the realization of certain moral and spiritual values.

This 'oneness' of Swamiji is also universal. According to him every religion must be universal. What he meant is that virtues such

as brotherhood, friendship, compassion, justice, etc are not confined to a sect or a religious group. They are applicable to everybody without any exception. In other words, every religion must accept the universality of these values.

Again, Swamiji claims that the principles of religion must be justified by reason. 'The first test of true teaching must be that the teaching should not contradict reason.'³ '...it is better that mankind should become atheist by following reason than blindly believe in two hundred millions of gods on the authority of anybody.'⁴

Swamiji has repeatedly claimed that the principles of ethics and religion should be rational so that there is no gulf between faith and reason. In other words, what we accept in religion or ethics has its basis in reason. Since the principles of both ethics and true religion are justified on rational grounds, they are independent of all supernatural beings such as God, the universal Spirit, or the Absolute. In western philosophy, Kant has tried to make ethics independent of religion, but Swamiji has made both ethics and religion independent of any supernatural being, or any entity accepted on the ground of mere faith.

Vivekananda's Idea of God

It may be asked: How can we make religion independent of God or supernatural being? The God of Swamiji is not an external mysterious being. He is to be realized in every soul. Swamiji says: 'If a king goes mad, and runs about trying to find the king of his country, he will never find him, because he is the king himself. ... It is better that we know we are God and give up this fool's search after Him;...' ⁵ Again he says: 'The end of all religions is the realizing of God in the soul. That is the one universal religion. If there is one universal truth in all religions, I place it here—in

realizing God.'⁶ Vivekananda also says that one becomes religious when one begins to see God in men and women. From this it follows that the principles of ethics are justified by reason, and the God of religion is justified by identifying it with every man and woman. Thus both ethics and religion become autonomous, independent of any supernatural being.

Swamiji establishes the underlying Unity from the very nature of the Self or atman. He says: 'Without the "I" there can be no "you" outside. From this some philosophers came to the conclusion that the external world did not exist save in the subject; that the "you" existed only in the "I". Others have argued that the "I" can only be known through the "you" and with equal logic. These two views are partial truths, each wrong in part and each right in part. Thought is as much material and as much in nature as body is. Both matter and mind exist in a third, a unity which divides itself into the two. This unity is the Atman, the real Self.'⁷ From this it follows that the selfish 'I' is not fundamental or a part of the unity. The 'I' and 'you' are two sides of the same coin. Since selfishness has its roots in the 'I', the unity between the 'I' and the 'you' would make us unselfish and thereby pave the way for harmony. In contemporary western philosophy, philosophers such as Wittgenstein and Strawson have tried to cut across the dichotomy between 'I' and 'you' at the epistemic level. In other words, the understanding of the meaning of 'I' presupposes the understanding of the meaning of 'you' and vice versa. This would lead us to the metaphysical question whether there is an underlying unity between them. In Swamiji we have an answer to this question. In addition to the unity of 'I' and 'you', he has emphasized the unity between body and mind, or between matter and thought. He says, 'There is being, "x", which is manifesting itself as both mind and matter.'⁸ Bertrand Russell and some realists tried to

3. *Complete Works*, Vol. 2, p. 390.

4. *Complete Works*, Vol. 2, p. 336.

5. *Complete Works*, Vol. 2, p. 324.

6. *Complete Works*, Vol. 1, p. 324.

7. *Complete Works*, Vol. 7, p. 101.

8. *Complete Works*, Vol. 7, p. 102.

substantiate the view that both mind and matter are different arrangements of the same type of entities. In other words, they are not radically different, or different in kind. The difference between them has been explained in terms of arrangements only, not in terms of the entities to be arranged. Here also Vivekananda's philosophy would throw some light for building a more comprehensive metaphysical system. His ideas may be used to resolve the age-old controversy between idealism and realism (or materialism).

Again, Swamiji has asserted the oneness or the unity among individuals by postulating equal potentiality and divinity in each individual. He says: '... potentially, each one of us has that infinite ocean of Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss as our birthright, our real nature; and the difference between us is caused by the greater or lesser power to manifest that divine. Therefore the Vedanta lays down that each man should be treated not as what he manifests, but as what he stands for. Each human being stands for the divine, and, therefore, every teacher should be helpful, not by condemning man, but by helping him to call forth the divinity that is within him.'⁹ From this it follows that we must respect each individual equally. Differences between individuals are to be explained in terms of degrees of manifestation of the same potentiality. Moreover we have some duty towards others. Swamiji has postulated unity not only among human beings but also among all the beings of the universe. The unity of Swamiji is all-pervasive and all-encompassing. He says, 'The whole of this universe is one Unity, one Existence, physically, mentally, morally and spiritually.'¹⁰

As regards the paths for the realization of the ultimate goal of life, Swamiji has postu-

lated unity among them also. As regards the mutual relationship between these paths, he thinks that they criss-cross and overlap. 'There is not really so much difference between knowledge (jnana) and love (bhakti) as people sometimes imagine. ... in the end they converge and meet and end at the same point.'¹¹

From the above discussion it follows that Swamiji is postulating 'oneness' or 'unity' wherever we come across conflict, which is the source of suffering and unhappiness. Moreover, he has also shown how the theoretical side is to be supplemented with the practical side so that the unity can be realized in this life. The practical side has been addressed in his lectures on practical Vedanta. Hence Swamiji has discussed both the theoretical and the practical side of his concept of unity which will resolve all types of conflict and thereby remove all types of suffering.

Critics of Swamiji may ask whether he has introduced any new theory or new method which cannot be traced in the history of philosophy. Is he not simply applying or explicating the concept of unity found in the Advaita Vedanta? Has he solved any problem which no one has solved? To this my reply is: (1) In his application of the concept of unity Swamiji has shown some novelty, although the concept of unity is to be found in Vedanta. This is enough to establish him as a philosopher, even if it is not enough to establish him as an original philosopher. (2) He has also solved some of the problems of morality and the law of karma in Indian philosophy, which his predecessors could not solve. Moreover, his view or solution would be acceptable to almost all types of philosophical systems of the world.

In the next section I shall show how he has solved some of these problems.

(to be continued)

9. *Complete Works*, Vol. 1, p. 388.

10. *Complete Works*, Vol. 2, p. 249.

11. *Complete Works*, Vol. 3, p. 32.

Development of Values through Education

SWAMI ABHIRAMANANDA

Swami Abhiramanandaji heads the Ramakrishna Mission College of Education in Coimbatore. In this remarkable paper, Abhiramanandaji discusses the value of imparting proper education in modern times and discusses how the world seems to appreciate value education nowadays.

The Present Educational Scenario

The educational system that we follow in India today is based on Macaulay's policies which were introduced by the British in the year 1836. Its main aim was to make Indians culturally akin to the Europeans. The fundamental features of the western concept of education are accumulation of information and improvement of work-skills. The more information a person acquires, the more knowledgeable, and therefore the more educated, he is considered to be. This concept has led to the growth of Information Technology at an unimaginably furious pace, thanks to modern technological devices like the computer, television, satellite and the Internet.

Another important feature of the western educational system is its materialistic outlook. Since the Industrial Revolution, the main thrust of the western society has been to exploit nature to produce and consume more goods, and to maximize profits by selling those commodities. This has led to lavish consumption, ruthless despoliation of natural resources, environmental pollution, unhealthy competition and the consequent senseless violence.

The Harm the Present System has Done

The West has no doubt contributed immensely to the welfare of humanity. Owing to their efforts, poverty and illiteracy have been obliterated to a great extent, the basic needs of humankind have been taken care of and the standard of living has improved. But has the western system of education, based as it is on the two concepts of accumulation of informa-

tion and materialism, solved the problems of life? Has it increased humankind's happiness and peace of mind? Has it taught the human being to solve the existential problems of life? Has it enabled us to live in amity with our fellow-beings?

The answer is an emphatic no. In the very words of the westerners, the mindless violence they are facing today is unprecedented in the history of the world. In the year 1992 alone, 48% of US citizens possessed guns, resulting in 640,000 gun-involved accidents, including the bizarre gun shooting by children in classrooms, killing teachers and students with blind stupidity. An eminent British psychologist says that a child born in UK today stands ten times greater chance of being admitted to a mental hospital than to a university. An American author remarks sarcastically that the autobiographies of thousands of Americans can be written in just three words—hurry, worry and bury.

Anticipating these events, the renowned historian Arnold Toynbee observed in the beginning of the 20th century:

In the present age the world has been united on the material plane by western technology. But this western skill has not only annihilated distance. It has armed the peoples of the world with weapons of devastating power at a time when they have been brought to point-blank range of each other without yet having learnt to know and love each other.

Bertrand Russell also warned that unless humanity increases in wisdom as much as in

knowledge, mere increase of knowledge will only lead to increase of sorrow. A Boston College psychologist pinpoints that the core problem facing American schools is a moral one and that all other problems derive from it. He further says that unless character education is put on the top of the agenda no attempts at school reforms are likely to succeed.

The Indian System of Education

In contrast to this western style of education, the ancient Indian system was very different. The Indian system did not encourage materialism and consumerism. The sages of India lived in harmony with nature and even worshipped nature. The presiding deities of the different aspects of nature were named differently as Mitra, Varuna, Indra, Aryama, etc, and divine hymns were composed on them. Plants and trees and other life-forms were respected and worshipped. The people who were adored in India were not the rich and the royal, but great renouncers like the Buddha, Sankara and Sri Ramakrishna. India always believed with Gandhiji that Mother Nature has enough for man's need but not for man's greed.

With the passage of time, however, there was a gradual deterioration of values and with the conquest of India by foreign powers the decline became steep. It was only after independence that the Indian government could contemplate formulating an educational policy of its own. The First and Second (Five Year) Plan Documents envisaged the development of an integrated personality of the student. The Radhakrishnan Commission was keen to introduce spiritual training in education and recommended disciplines like meditation, study of the lives of great religious leaders, and the inclusion of a preliminary study of philosophy and religion in the college curriculum. Later, the Mudaliar Commission made religious education voluntary to be taught outside school hours.

In the National Policy on Education 1986, we see a growing concern over the erosion of essential values. The commission refers to the

increasing cynicism in society and recommends a curriculum which would make education a forceful tool for the cultivation of moral and spiritual values. It proposes to achieve this through a two-pronged strategy of elimination of social evils such as obscurantism, religious fanaticism, superstition and fatalism, and positively through the cultivation of values like pride in our national heritage and fixing of national goals. The commission also clearly spells out the various values that are required to build a sane nation and a harmonious personality of its citizens. They are: (1) character-building, (2) respect for elders, teachers and the law, (3) health awareness, (4) nation-building, (5) national integrity, (6) dignity of labour, (7) honesty, (8) sincerity, (9) sense of responsibility, (10) personal development, and (11) love for the nation, society and family.

Further, the commission seeks to bridge the existing gap between the formal system of education and India's rich and varied cultural traditions. 'The preoccupation with modern technologies should not be allowed to sever our new generations from their ancient moorings. De-culturization and alienation must be avoided at all costs. Education must bring out a fine synthesis between modern technology and the nation's ancient heritage,' says the document, and invites old masters and resource persons, irrespective of their formal educational qualifications, to contribute to the cultural enrichment of education.

Unfortunately these ideas have remained only on paper even 16 years after the publication of the policy statement.

According to modern science, the human brain has two hemispheres. The left hemisphere stands for external perfection, aggressive dynamism and endless greed for personal success, pay and promotion. The right hemisphere stands for internal excellence through higher ideals of service, sacrifice and holistic thinking. In the western system of education too much emphasis is laid on the development of the left hemisphere to the detriment of the

growth of the right. On the other hand, the ancient Indian system laid more emphasis on the development of the right hemisphere which caused it to neglect the growth of the left hemisphere. For a society to survive happily, a judicious combination of the two is what is needed.

Swami Vivekananda, the champion of the cause of education, provides the corrective by declaring that science and religion should shake hands with each other. But he laments that the present system of education does not adopt a positive approach. To quote Swamiji:

The education that you are getting now has some good points, but it has a tremendous disadvantage which is so great that the good things are all weighed down.... The child is taken to school, and the first thing that he learns is that his father is a fool, the second thing that his grandfather is a lunatic, the third thing that all his teachers are hypocrites, the fourth that all the sacred books are lies! By the time he is sixteen he is a mass of negation, lifeless and boneless.

That the Indian system develops a student negatively is proved by a recent survey. A survey of children between 6 and 16 years of age across 63 countries showed that the IQ rank of Indian children was no. 1 at the age of 6, and no. 26 at the age of 16. It is interesting to note that the Indian child's IQ has slipped from global no. 1 position to the 26th place in the course of 10 years, and these 10 years are when the child gets his/her education. It is therefore clear that there is nothing wrong with our people; the fault is only in the educational system.

According to Swami Vivekananda education should have a positive content. Practice of purity, selflessness, concentration, and self-control help a person manifest the perfection that is already in him/her. The end and aim of all education should be man-making, character-building, life-building, assimilation of ideas—to bring out a harmonious personality from out of a student. Further, the imparting of knowledge should be in the hands of self-

sacrificing, noble men. An effective educational system should make giant strides in science and technology with morality and harmony as the base.

We thus see how close the policies of the Indian education commissions are to Swami Vivekananda's ideas. The sum and substance of all these ideas is that true education should help to produce citizens of integrity, who would lead simple lives, think highly and use all their scientific and technological knowledge only for the collective good of humanity. To develop into an integrated personality and to progress in knowledge with a compassionate outlook are the true ideals of education.

Surprisingly, the 21st Century Document on Education, published by the UNESCO, also recommends the type of education which Swami Vivekananda envisaged a hundred years ago—a synthesis of western and Indian ideals. The Delor's Commission, which produced the Document under the title 'Learning: The Treasure Within', speaks of the need for four pillars of education. The first two relate to the western system and the last two to the Indian. They are:

1. Learning to know (accumulation of knowledge and information);
2. Learning to do (improvement of work-skills);
3. Learning to live together (developing a harmonious personality); and
4. Learning to be (character education).

So, for the citadel of education to be strong in the 21st century, all the four pillars should be equally strong. Equal emphasis should be laid on both the scientific and moral aspects of education.

At the implementational level, several committees have recommended various measures. The Ramakrishna Mission College of Education, Coimbatore, conducted a national seminar on the 'Educational Thoughts of Swami Vivekananda' from 17 to 19 January 1999 in which 130 principals and eminent educationists took part. The important resolutions which they passed at the meeting with respect

to value education is worth reproducing here:

1. As teachers shape the future of students, they should be tested for aptitude and values at the time of recruitment.

2. The documents of policy-making bodies like the NCTE, which contain ideas on value education, must be adopted in all teacher training institutes. They must also be instructed to organize seminars/workshops on value education and other associated activities periodically in their schools.

3. The academic staff colleges of universities should be asked to offer refresher courses on value education so as to orient lecturers of higher education to this subject.

4. Deterioration of moral values can be checked right from 'the first school'. Hence short-term value education courses should be conducted for mothers.

5. An integrated approach may be evolved by embedding the content of textbooks with identified value-elements.

6. Every teacher must be duly oriented to impart a particular value whenever he/she meets the students. It is better to design a special year-plan to avoid repetitions by different teachers.

7. Values can be written on the blackboard and walls of the institutions so as to inspire students.

8. Stories from mythology, biographies, and patriotic songs can be included in the school curriculum. Visits to places of historical importance may be arranged to enlighten students about our ancient culture and the pluralistic nature of society.

9. Biographical sketches of great leaders and religious teachers can be included in language subjects.

10. Inter-religious prayers may be arranged in schools every week.

These practices will help the student to build up a harmonious personality. How does this process take place? Let us take an example. The human body is made up of five elements—earth, fire, water, air and space. If we ponder over this a little deeply, we notice a

marvel. Generally, water and fire cannot co-exist. Earth (solid material) is the very antithesis of space, which is another name for emptiness. A gust of wind will blow away the fire. Thus all the five elements contradict each other. Yet, they not only coexist harmoniously in the same body but also help it to grow into a healthy individual. This is possible because the divinity that is present in the heart of every being reconciles these seemingly incongruous elements into a unified whole and creates a healthy environment.

Similarly a person with a harmonious and divine personality will be able to reconcile the apparent contradictions of life, face its challenges squarely and grow spiritually. Education should enable a person to grow in this manner.

It is said that the great Greek philosopher Socrates once asked a boy on the road, 'Where is a good apple available?' and the boy pointed out to a nearby shop. Socrates asked the boy again, 'Where is good honey available?' and the boy quickly directed him to another shop. Socrates then asked him, 'Where is a good man available?' The boy could not give him a reply. Socrates told him, 'If you want to grow up into a good man, then follow me.'

About 2000 years ago, another Greek philosopher by name Diogenes was carrying a lighted lantern in his hand and was searching for something in the scorching sunlight. When asked why he did so, he replied that he was searching for a good man.

The world has forever been searching for good men since and is yet to find some. The prize that Socrates received for the searching of a good man was a cup of poison. For a similar effort, Christ was crucified and Lincoln was rewarded with bullets. But let us not lose hope. Let the search continue until the day the whole world shall become good and think only of the welfare of humankind and never of hatred or destruction. Let our whole educational system be tuned in such a way that all the advances in knowledge are only a blessing to humanity and never a curse. □

Symbolism in the *Bhagavadgītā*

C. P. SOTI

Mr C.P. Soti is from Delhi. In this article, he gives a simple but appealing explanation of the symbolism in the Gītā.

Since time immemorial, we have been praying to God to illumine and enlighten our intellect. Of the different prayers, the Gāyatrī, found in the *Yajur Veda* (36.3) is the most famous. It is stated in the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Valmiki that even Rama used to chant the Gāyatrī mantra. It is the firm belief of devotees that the Gāyatrī mantra destroys the effects of all sins and purifies the heart and intellect. Another prayer, the Abhyāroha mantra, which also is well known, is from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (1.3.28). This is being chanted by millions of Indians since thousands of years. The prayer is: 'From the unreal lead me to the Real; from darkness lead me to Light; from death lead me to Immortality.'

In studying the *Bhagavadgītā* we find answers to these prayers. It contains answers to all the problems of humanity. The study and following of the teachings of the *Gītā* will bring peace and solace to persons afflicted by the three types of suffering: (a) suffering caused by one's own body and mind, (b) suffering caused by other beings and (c) suffering caused by nature.

The *Gītā* acts as a beacon, showing the path to the Self or God and the road to freedom from all miseries. There is a Chinese saying: 'The wise man who seeks the way carries a

candle before him.' This candle, which is supposed to be knowledge, only shows the way. We have to follow the path, walking step by step. The *Gītā* is one of the most important guides that shows us the path to Truth.

The teachings of the *Gītā* are comprehensive, universal and inspiring. Its teachings do not belong to any cult, sect, creed, age, place, or country. They are meant for the people of the whole world. It is unfortunate that the *Gītā* is regarded as a sacred book of the Hindus only. It is in fact the sacred book of the entire humanity. But even in many Hindu homes this great scripture is worshipped with sandal paste, flowers, etc; it is not read and understood so as to benefit from its teachings. Until recently, our scriptures were not only regarded



as sacred but they were deemed secret also. They were considered to be the exclusive property of a few priests, and the common masses had no access to them. Wilkins, the first European to translate the *Gītā* into English in 1785, had to struggle a lot to get a copy. Even today, the wonderful teachings of Sri Krishna have not reached ordinary people.

The teachings of the *Gītā* have been presented symbolically. Symbolism is the safest and surest, and at the same time the most effective, way of understanding the Truth be-

cause it can be appreciated by a deserving aspirant according to his intuition. As all of us know, Sri Krishna, who was driving the chariot of Arjuna, taught the latter in the middle of the battlefield of Kurukshetra. This teaching was to enable Arjuna to find a way out of the confusing situation which had led him to despondency and inaction. The battle of Kurukshetra can be read symbolically: it is not a fight between armies but a fight within the human being. It is very interesting to note that, while all other scriptures were compiled by sages in the seclusion of forest retreats, the *Gītā* was born on the battleground. This setting was deliberately chosen by the great teacher in order to repudiate the idea that the guiding principles of human life could be thought of only in the peace of mountains and forests. Equilibrium of mind can be had as much in the battlefield as in the solitude of the cave. The battleground symbolizes the turbulent human life, where one has to face innumerable problems and baffling situations. The *Gītā* teaches us how to equip ourselves to fight the battle of life, because without preparation the warfare called life cannot be waged successfully.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak quotes an interesting incident from the 'Anugītā' in his *Gita Rahasya*. After the Mahabharata war, Arjuna requested Sri Krishna to repeat the teachings of the *Gītā* once again to him because he had forgotten some of them. Krishna replied that in the battlefield he had discoursed on those truths while in the yogic state; they had come from deep concentration and single-pointedness of mind. Such a discourse was not possible under normal conditions. Now, although nothing is impossible for the Lord, it proves the significance of deliberately choosing the battleground for the discourse.

Sankara in his *Tattwa Bodha* prescribes the qualifications of a seeker.¹ These qualifications are:

1. The capacity to discriminate between the permanent and the impermanent and the ability to reject the impermanent.
2. Freedom from all emotions and the absence of the desire for enjoyment of the results of actions in both this world and the next. Dispassion should arise out of discrimination rather than despair.
3. The capacity to concentrate and control the mind. Adherence to one's own dharma. The power of endurance. Faith in the words of the teacher. Single-pointedness of mind.
4. A burning desire to solve the problem of life.

Krishna found that all the aforesaid qualifications were present in Arjuna. Arjuna of the *Gītā* symbolizes a normal man in whom both virtue and vice are found intermingled and who has competence enough to put into practice the teachings of the *Gītā*. So, out of the five Pandavas, Krishna chose only Arjuna to be his disciple. Yudhishtira was already well established in yoga. Bhima, on the other hand, was ever thirsty to fight enemies. So he could not be the right choice. Nakula and Sahadeva did not play any significant role in the great epic. Thus Arjuna alone stood somewhere between the extremes. He had outgrown animal propensities and at the same time had not yet entered the domain of the Divine. He was therefore the best representative of humanity in the sense that even today, thousands of years after that historical event, he remains so: even while engaged in the field of action, he thirsts for knowledge. As Swami Ranganathanandaji writes:²

The dialogue is between Krishna and Arjuna. In our ancient scriptures, Arjuna is considered as the incarnation of 'Nara', Man, and Krishna of 'Narayana', the supreme Lord. It is not that Krishna is imparting his teachings here to any particular

1. Br Swarupa Chaitanya, *Tattwa Bodha of Sankaracharya* (Bombay: Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, 1990), pp. 11-8.

2. Swami Ranganathananda, *An Introduction to the Study of the Gita* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1997), p. 5.

sect, but to man through his disciple Arjuna.

While Arjuna is the best representative of humankind, Krishna is represented both as a historical individual as also an incarnation who manifests himself whenever evil becomes the dominant trend in the world.

The *Bhagavadgītā* symbology does not end there. In the 'Gītā-dhyāna', this scripture is equated to a cow. 'All the Upanishads are cows; the milkman is Krishna. Partha (Arjuna) is the calf; men of purified intellect are the drinkers; and the milk is the supreme nectar of the *Gītā*.'

Let us look at the message of the *Gītā* from another standpoint. We can see in paintings and sculptures depicting the *Gītā* teachings that Krishna is in the driver's seat of the chariot while teaching Arjuna. The following details can be found in most pictures: (1) the chariot has four wheels; (2) it is driven by four white horses; (3) Krishna is holding the reins and a whip in his hands; (4) the chariot has a saffron flag on the top with the word Om written on it; (5) Hanuman is sitting on the roof of the chariot; (6) Arjuna is sitting in the chariot with folded hands, and is listening to Krishna attentively.

We can continue our study of *Gītā* symbology now. The four wheels of the chariot symbolize the four Vedas. The Vedas contain all knowledge. Wilcox states: 'It [India] is the land of the great Vedas, the most remarkable works containing not only religious ideas for a perfect life, but also facts which all the sciences have proved true. Electricity, radium, electrons, airships, all seem to be known to the seers (Rishis)'

While playing the part of the charioteer, Krishna holds the reins of the four white horses yoked to the chariot. They symbolize the four yogas—*karma*, *raja*, *jnana* and *bhakti*. The snow-white colour of the steeds suggest purity as the basis of all the yogas. Their combined effort is necessary to draw the chariot forward. Since Sri Krishna deftly handles all the four yogas, and pays equal importance to

all of them, he is called Yogeswara. The saffron colour of the flag on the chariot symbolizes righteousness and renunciation; it augurs the victory of righteousness over evil forces. Fire which is of saffron colour is regarded as the symbol of renunciation. We said that there is the sacred symbol Om on the flag. According to the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* (6-10), Om comprises three alphabets: *a-kāra* (or the letter 'a'), *u-kāra* (or the letter 'u'), and *ma-kāra* (or the letter 'm'). The first letter represents the beginning (*ādīmatvam*), the second letter represents continuation (*utkarṣa*), and the last letter represents dissolution (*mita*). Hence the word Om represents the power responsible for the creation, development and dissolution of the universe, ie, the supreme Being. Sri Krishna says in the *Gītā* that he is Om. Again he says (in 8.13) that he who departs by leaving the body while uttering Om attains the supreme goal.

Hanuman of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is presented as a perfect personality. Ever since Valmiki introduced him in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, his personality has captured the imagination of millions over the centuries, and his excellent character is reflected in our literature. Hanuman had these qualities among others: (a) He is portrayed as a great supporter of dharma. Though he performed many great feats, he never thought that the achievements were his own. He was the embodiment of self-effacement—of total surrender to the Supreme. (b) He is described as a person of vast learning. W.J. Wilkins writes: 'The chief of the monkeys is perfect: no one equals him in the Sastras, in learning and in ascertaining the sense of the scriptures. In all sciences, in the rules of austerity, he rivals the preceptor of the gods.'³

Near the Rishyamooka hill, where Hanuman met Rama for the first time, appreciating his learning as observed from the conversation, Rama said to Lakshmana: 'It won't be possible for one who has not studied Rig Veda, who has not absorbed the spirit of the Yajur

3. W.J. Wilkins, *Hindu Mythology* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 1988), p. 405.

Veda and who has not mastered the Sama Veda to speak in such a beautiful manner. Definitely he has studied grammar a number of times because despite telling so many things, he has not said anything which is incorrect.⁴

Hanuman is depicted as a mighty hero in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. He performed great deeds of valour and physical strength which no other creature of the time could have accomplished. We do not find a single incident where Hanuman has committed a mistake and gets blamed for it. Sita saw a symbol of hope in Hanuman. As a devotee, Hanuman surpasses all. His devotion and service to Rama are examples even today. Hanuman asked for only one boon from Rama: 'Please give me this blessing that my affection for you will never diminish.' All these great qualities are needed in any warfare and Hanuman's sitting on the top of the chariot means that the chariot carries the weight of the occupant with these traits.

Arjuna's sitting inside the chariot with folded hands indicates his total faith in the teacher as also humility. Humility is absolutely needed in order to succeed in our endeavours. The grace of God is also vital for the success of any mission. God is above virtue and vice, and there is no need for him to entangle himself in any action, good or bad. Although he himself is actionless, his grace is always for the good and the righteous. Krishna's agreeing to be the unarmed charioteer of Arjuna signifies this great truth. Again, God is the great charioteer, residing in the hearts of all beings. Thus the chariot sym-

bology summarizes the contents of the *Gītā*.

The teachings of the *Gītā* should be understood and practised by all of us. It is unfortunate that instead of the *Gītā* message's reaching the people and helping them in character-building, the message of unscrupulous leaders, destroying the ethos of society, gains more and more importance.

It is a matter of great regret, said Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, that young men and women of our universities know less about the *Gītā* and the principles of Hindu religion than the undergraduates of European universities know about the Bible and Christianity. Even in the USA, some of the universities have prescribed the *Gītā* as a subject in their curriculum. Swami Sivananda of the Divine Life Society had said: 'Study of the *Gītā* must be made compulsory in all the schools and colleges of India; nay, of the whole world. It must become a textbook for students of schools and colleges. It must be introduced in their curriculum. It should find a very important place in every scheme of education.'⁵

Mahatma Gandhi once visited one of the biggest libraries in London and asked the librarian: 'What spiritual book is issued most frequently?' The librarian replied: 'It is the *Gītā*.' Gandhiji insisted that the 19 verses (54-72) of the second chapter of the *Gītā* should be translated into all the languages of the world and distributed everywhere. What to talk of complying with this wish of Gandhiji, I wonder how many of those who swear by his name are even aware of this! □

4. Valmiki, *Rāmāyaṇa*, 'Kiṣkindhā Kāṇḍa', 3.28-9.

5. Swami Sivananda, *Srimad Bhagavadgita* (Durban: Divine Life Society, 1962), pp. 44-5.

Stick to God! Who cares what comes to the body or anything else! Through the terrors of evil, say O my God, my love! Through the pangs of death, say O my God, my love! Through all the evils under the sun, say O my God, my love!

—Swami Vivekananda

The Neglected Ones

The first story is that of the abandoned child. Lakshmana Bhatta was searching for some means of decent livelihood. After having suffered from the pangs of poverty for long, Lakshmana decided to go to Banaras along with his wife and son and settle down there. Thus, after a long, tedious and dangerous journey, the family had reached Banaras.

Banaras appeared wonderful for the simple Lakshmana. He managed to rent a small house and with the little money he had, tried to feed the family. After much struggle, a few students also turned up to learn Sanskrit from him. When the horizon of his life appeared to see the first rays of the dawn of hope, there was shocking news. There were communal riots! Murders and plundering went on unabated. People were running for their lives. Helpless, Lakshmana Bhatta also fled with a pregnant wife and small son. He managed to collect what little he could and went where his feet led him. His came to Champaranya, then a thick forest. It was a horrible experience for the family. His wife was terrified. She could walk no more but had to walk in order to save her life. The son cried bitterly but his parents were helpless. In the dense forest, amidst stunning darkness, Lakshmana's wife gave birth to a child. Lakshmana had something strange and harsh to say: 'We have no other way left than to abandon this child here and run for safety. We are poor. We don't have money. Who will protect your child under such terrible circumstances? We can't stay here any further too.' 'What do you mean?' cried his wife. 'How cruel of you to say that we should abandon our child!' But arguments failed. She wept holding the child in her arms. 'We can't continue with this small babe with us. Be firm and allow the child to remain in God's hands,' said the husband. The mother *had* to abandon her new-

born. She laid it on soft grass, covered it with a piece of cloth, and left with her husband, weeping bitterly.

The family managed to reach a place called Chowdanagar. Slowly the news reached them that peace had been restored in Banaras. That instant, the wife pleaded with her husband to return to where they had abandoned their child. Lakshmana laughed sadly and asked: 'Do you think the child will be alive till now?' The wife was adamant. And so they returned by the same path. After some search, they reached the exact spot where they had abandoned the child. Surprise of surprises! Their son was alive! What a joy it was for the mother! She embraced her infant tenderly. The family once again travelled to Banaras with great apprehension about the future. The mother called her child Vallabha.

The next is the story of the abandoned mother. 'My child, are you going to desert me at such a stage in my life? Your father passed away recently. And I love you so much. You too wish to go away, my son?' cried the mother. But Vallabha was firm. 'Mother, you know I have some higher purpose to achieve in life. You know how things have taken shape in my life. Please don't stop me.' The mother remembered all the strange incidents that had taken place in her son's life...

A scholar by name Narayana Bhatta had undertaken the task of teaching Lakshmana's providential child. Providential indeed, because the teacher did not have to struggle to teach him the Vedas and other scriptures. Vallabha learnt them with astonishing speed. Even as the other students struggled with elementary texts, this boy stunned everyone with his brilliance: he learnt all the Vedas and devotional texts in no time. His discussions with

others proved that he was no ordinary lad. However, he wasn't only the arguing type. His devotion to Sri Krishna was a sight for the gods to see. His love for the Lord and talks about Him appealed to every heart. Hardcore non-believers too were impressed with his dialogues on Krishna.

Vallabha's parents were proud of their son. His mother, specially, dreamt various dreams about him. But fate had other plans. When Vallabha was in his eleventh year, he lost his father. The whole world changed for him, as it were. He understood that he was not destined to lead the life of an ordinary scholar. That day, he told his mother of his intention of leaving home for good...

Vallabha's mother said, 'With what great difficulty I have brought you up! Today you have mercilessly decided to give up your home!' Vallabha was unmoved. He declared: 'Mother, you speak from your angle of vision alone. But I have a larger interest. I have a greater work to do. After all, where am I going? Am I going away to become a mendicant? I shall return after some years to meet you. And you needn't worry. Brother is there to care for you.' The next morning, with tears in his eyes, the son took leave of his dear mother.

The final story is that of the abandoned Deity. One day Sri Krishna appeared in Vallabha's dream and said: 'My dear Vallabha, I am leading an abandoned life. You are busy with so many activities. Have you forsaken me?' Vallabha was overjoyed to see the Lord, but was also sad that he had indeed been so very busy all these years. How fast had events taken place in his life! ...

After taking leave of his mother, Vallabha had walked all the way to the south. He had gone to his native village. People remembered their dear Lakshmana Bhatta, and were happy to have his son in their midst. They were happier when they realized that the young boy was a great pundit and devotee. How splendidly he talked! How meaningful his discourses were! His brilliance had brought him

victories over philosophers of various schools. Seeing all this, some admirers had suggested that he must go to the great kingdom of Vijayanagara. King Krishnadeva Raya ruled over the vast Vijayanagara empire then. He was a great patron of learning.

Vallabha had gone to Vijayanagara. Debates had been arranged. In the presence of the emperor, the young lad had won in all arguments with the scholars of that country. The emperor had desired that the young pundit should stay in his kingdom itself, but Vallabha had politely refused. He had some other work to do. He had decided to return home for some time and then travel again to other places of pilgrimage.

After days of travelling, Vallabha had returned to Banaras once again. The joy of his mother had known no bounds. Her son had become a big man, respected by emperors! It was then that she realized that she shouldn't stop him from touring; tours meant acquiring fame for her. After three more years of visiting different places, Vallabha came back to his mother. It was then that she pestered him to get married. He had to agree. And he had got married. After a few years in Varanasi, he had finally settled down in Vrindaban, the abode of Krishna...

It was in Vrindaban that Vallabha had experienced something extraordinary. 'I have no one to care for me. I am living alone here in the Govardhana hill. Come and see me,' said Sri Krishna in dream to Vallabha. Vallabha got up immediately and went over to the Govardhana hill. There, to his amazement, he found a beautiful image of Krishna. Vallabha embraced Krishna and named Him Sri Nathji. 'We shall build a temple for Nathji,' declared Vallabha to assembled disciples and friends. And in time the temple came up. Vallabha installed Sri Nathji in the temple amidst beautiful celebrations. The abandoned Lord had found a beautiful home at last!

Sri Vallabhacharya, the founder of Pushti Marga of devotion, thus began the cult of Krishna worship in a big way. □

Book Reviews

THE GLORY OF INDIAN HERITAGE: Edited by K. Mahadevan, V.K. Madhavan Kutty, Kiran Ramachandran and Joseph Ouseparampil. Published by B.R. Publishing Corporation, A-6 Nimri Commercial Centre, Ashoka Vihar, New Delhi 110052. Pp. xii+471. Rs.600.

The Glory of Indian Heritage is a collection of essays by eminent scholars on various aspects of Indian culture. All these together highlight the wonderful heritage of India.

There are a few countries in the world that have a rich past and an unbroken cultural tradition. India is the foremost among them. The early seers of the Vedic age delved deep into the recesses of the human mind and gleaned nuggets of truth, which nourished and sustained the culture of this land, making the culture all the more resilient. The sages laid down eternal values for the welfare of the society and fortified it in such a way that foreign invasions could not make a dent in its social organization. Indian traditions thus survived the onslaught of time and Indian culture still continues to fascinate the world.

The editors of this volume spare no pains in collecting and presenting these essays in a meaningful way. The contributors are experts in their respective fields and have put the essence of their studies in these short essays. All the essayists have kept the common reader before them and have presented the information to satisfy all their doubts.

The 24 essays have been grouped here into three parts. They are: (1) Panorama of Culture, (2) Perspectives on Development, and (3) Eminent Personalities. There are 12 essays in Part 1, and they deal with topics like composite culture, philosophy and religion, classical music and dance, Sanskrit and other Indian languages, Indian art since Ravi Verma and Indian architecture through the ages. The opening article in this section emphasizes the composite culture of India and explains that this is the product of borrowing, sharing and a fusion of myriad streams of thought that take place over the passage of time.

Part 2 is titled 'Perspectives on Development'. It highlights: a. Yoga and Ayurveda; b. Astrology; c. Scientific Excellence; and d. Economic Development. All these articles are scholarly and fortify the reader's study of Indian culture.

Part 3 contains short biographical articles on

eminent personalities such as Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, J. Krishnamurti, etc, as well as a host of political leaders. There are many recent scientists discussed. And there are articles on Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, V.K.K. Menon and J.R.D. Tata. When the reader completes reading the book, he finds himself well informed on all the intricate aspects of the culture of this great land.

There are few books of this type, available to the general public. The book, therefore, is a welcome addition to the world of books on Indian literature.

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SCIENCE IN THE KṚṢṆA YAJURVEDA: By Dr Rani Rama Krishna. Published by Shri Jayalakshmi Publications, 3-35 Near Rama Mandiram, Kukatpally, Hyderabad 500872. 1994. Pp. 154+x. Rs.75.

In Indian philosophical classics, the Veda as *śabda-pramāṇa* (verbal testimony) plays a significant role, because it is a unique source of knowledge. Etymologically, the word 'Veda' is derived from the root *vid* ('to know'). Vedic texts are classified under four headings: *Rg*, *Yajus*, *Sāma* and *Atharva*. Each consists of four parts: *saṁhitā*, *brāhmaṇa*, *āranyaka* and *upaniṣad*. The *saṁhitā* is a collection of hymns and prayers. The *brāhmaṇa* deals with sacrificial formulae. The *āranyaka* is basically an explanatory treatise on the sacrifices, though slightly different from the *brāhmaṇa*. *Yajurveda* has two *saṁhitās*: *Kṛṣṇa* (Black) and *Śukla* (White). The *Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa* and the *Taittiriya Āranyaka* belong to the *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda*. The *upaniṣad* is the fourth part of the Veda and consists of the knowledge of Atman and Brahman. The *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* consists of *Taittiriya*, *Katha*, *Śvetāśvatara*, *Mahānārāyaṇa* and *Maitrāyaṇi Upaniṣads*.

The book *Science in the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* is an important work by a Vedic scholar having modern scientific knowledge. It consists of four chapters: 1. Relevance of Vedas to the Modern World, 2. *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* and Solar Sciences, 3. *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* and Ethno-pharmacology, and 4. Miscellaneous Topics

of Scientific Interest in *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda*.

Normally the word 'science' in its wider sense means any systematic body of knowledge, such as normative, positive, formal and experimental sciences. However, in the present context, the term implies systems of empirical knowledge.

The author aims at making explicit the hidden scientific ideas in terms of contemporary scientific concepts. The topics concerning physical and medical sciences are considered in the comparative perspective. The author also thinks that there is considerable scope for scientific investigation in *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda*; astronomy, herbal medicine, applied mathematics, etc are considered to be important fields for research within the conceptual framework of Vedic literature.

The first chapter, 'Relevance of Vedas to the Modern World', re-examines Vedic texts with a twofold scientific outlook: (a) various practices and statements found in the Vedas are to be rationalized and explained scientifically, and (b) there is scope to discover new scientific principles in the system of the Vedas. To this effect, it is interesting to consider scientists' view of the relevance of mysticism in scientific theories. Some scientists think that eastern mysticism has all sorts of intelligent observations and deductions, some of which seem to anticipate the findings of modern science. However, even if there is scientific validity attributed to certain species of Vedic statements, it would be wrong to conclude that the Vedas are empirical in character, because the autonomy of the Vedas is due to the fact that they are an independent source of divine knowledge. The author has also pointed out the literary value of Vedic language, especially in the context of beautiful descriptions of nature. There are guiding principles of poetics like *alaṅkāras*. The Vedic hymns are structured in metaphorical and dynamic language.

In the second chapter, '*Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* and Solar Sciences', an attempt has been made to correlate the forces of nature as gods with the sources of energy as discovered by modern science. According to the Vedic seers, gods are sources of energy and brilliance. Sun is a god of energy and grace. The beneficial effects of Sun's rays were clearly expressed in *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* much before the discoveries made by modern science. And credit for the discovery of the solar spectrum and cosmic rays ought to be given to the seers of *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda*.

In the third chapter, '*Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* and Ethno-pharmacology', there is an interesting account of herbal medicine in the Veda. Nature is not only the sustainer of mankind and other living creatures by providing food and shelter, but it is also a rich source of medicine. Ethno-botany deals with the effects of plants on living bodies. The author claims that ethno-pharmacology is a branch

of knowledge concerning the relationship between ritualistic practices and their effects on the human body. In this regard, the author has considered about 26 trees and plants which are described in the ritual processes of *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda*. The trees *āśvattha* and *nyagrodha* are used in fundamental Vedic rituals. They contain alkaloids which are biologically active; the bark extraction relaxes the intestines. The trees also help in cleaning the atmosphere. Similarly, the pipal (banyan) tree, having ritualistic importance in the Veda, contains many hypoglycemic principles which are orally effective. However, the amount of scientific studies on holy trees is comparatively small and there is a necessity of comprehensive investigation. There is also a description of the use of 16 types of cereals and pulses, 13 grasses, 12 plants and six creepers. The author's account of plants and trees will open new avenues of research in the field of tropical medicine, we hope.

In the fourth chapter, 'Miscellaneous Topics of Scientific Interest in *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda*', the system of numbers including the concepts of zero and infinity, it is pointed out, were discovered in the context of glorifying the nature of reality. In the context of fire-worship, the seers also discovered the properties of the right-angled triangle. According to Vedic cosmology, man is always curious about the nature around him and speculated about the creation of the universe in which he thought of shape and size of the universe. The book encourages the Vedic scholars to think further and in this regard there is useful bibliography for comparative study. It is necessary to follow the scheme of transliteration consistently. The book is useful for Vedic scholars engaged in comparative study.

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MUNDAKA UPANIṢAD: Translation and commentary by Swami Muni Narayana Prasad. Published by D.K. Printworld, Sri Kunj, F-52 Bali Nagar, New Delhi 110015. 1998. Pp. viii+142. Rs. 120.

Belonging to the *Atharva Veda*, the *Mundaka Upaniṣad* comprises three chapters, each of which has two parts (*khaṇḍas*). The name of the Upaniṣad, deriving from the root *mund* implies that the seeker, after imbibing true knowledge, can shave off the ignorance enveloping his soul. The 64 verses or mantras of the Upaniṣad in mixed prose and verse embody the esoteric wisdom which was passed on from Brahmā to Atharvan, his eldest son. Atharvan

transmitted the supreme knowledge of the ultimate Reality to Āngiras (of olden times), who in turn passed it on to Satyavāha, son of Bhāradvāja. Satyavāha taught it to Āngiras, who was approached by Śaunaka, the great householder, with the query: 'By knowing which does the phenomena perceived through the mind and the senses become known, Venerable Sir?' The reply to this question forms the main content of this Upaniṣad.

The Upaniṣad speaks of two kinds of knowledge—the lower and the higher; the former is of the nature of pedagogical study, the latter relates to the attainment of Self-realization. The universe springs from the imperishable Being in a natural way. Brahman expands by way of His contemplative power (*tapas*): '... and thus is produced food; from food emerge *prāṇa*, mind, the reals and the worlds.' The distinction between *parā* and *aparā vidyās* in Chapter I.1 is followed by a description of ceremonial religion which is useful only to a limited extent. Rituals and sacrifices do not release one from the cycle of birth and death, nor do they dispel one's ignorance or lead one to immortality.

Chapter II of the Upaniṣad delineates the concept of the human soul (*ātman*) in relation to Brahman and shows the way to become one with the ultimate Reality. The imperishable Brahman is the abode of all beings; it is subtler than the subtle; it is life, speech, mind, reality, immortality, etc. It is the one Self of all. One needs to meditate on that Self employing the mystic syllable *Aum* as the bow and the Self within as the arrow.

Chapter III puts forth the meaningful allegory of the two birds clinging to the self-same tree—one partakes of the sweet fruit with relish while the other just looks on without eating. The former stands for the individual soul incarcerated in body and mind, the latter for the eternal, unconditioned, pure Consciousness. The supreme Self can be attained by way of truth, austerity, chastity, and right knowledge. 'By Truth is laid out the path leading to the gods...' But he alone can traverse it 'who longs for it with the whole heart,' who strives towards it with vigour, full attention and propriety and who leads 'a life of purity and spiritual inclination.'

Swami Muni Narayana Prasad, known for his writings and commentaries on the sacred texts, has done a great job by translating the *Mundaka Upaniṣad* into English and enriching it with his vast and deep knowledge of Indian philosophy.

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KATHA UPANIṢAD: Translation and commentary by Swami Muni Narayana Prasad. Published by D.K. Printworld. 1998. Pp. vii+152. Rs. 130.

Existence hangs on the twin poles of birth and death. But while birth is a matter of celebration, death is horrendous, shaking even the bravest. Man, the 'homo viator', is on 'an eternal pilgrimage,' moving from the lower to higher planes of consciousness. Driven by the innate existential urge, he is curious to know his fate after death. Death has remained the greatest mystery for the commoner and the eschatologist alike. Is there any fundamental link between what apparently is dead and what is alive? Is death an end in itself or a stepping-stone to better forms of existence?

The *Katha Upaniṣad*, belonging to the *Taittiriya* school of the *Yajur Veda*, unravels the mystery of death in a profound manner. It is based on a *Rg Vedic* story (X.135) in which an innocent but inquisitive boy, Naciketā, is sent by his father to the Lord of Death (Yama), but returns soon after, due to his intense faith (*śraddhā*). Naciketā learns *brahma-vidyā* from Yama, the secrets of death, the transitoriness of the phenomenal world, and the status of the soul after leaving the physical body. He comes to realize the difference between the good and the pleasant, the superiority of wisdom to wealth, the meaning, nature and significance of *Aum*, etc. The three wishes granted by Yama to Naciketā imparted wisdom to the latter and thence to humanity.

Swami Muni Narayana Prasad has employed his vast erudition in interpreting the ancient classical text for the modern reader, and deserves kudos for the same. His language is simple, style absorbing, and explanation of verses enlightening. The book is a welcome addition to the exegetical literature on the Upaniṣads.

Dr Satish K. Kapoor

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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

News and Reports

New Mission Centre

The Malliankaranai sub-centre of Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Chennai, was made a full-fledged branch centre of the Ramakrishna Mission under the name *Ramakrishna Mission, Malliankaranai*, on 6 May 2000 (Akshaya Tritiya day). The address of the new centre is: Ramakrishna Mission, PO Malliankaranai, via Uthiramerur, Dt Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu 603406 (Phone: 04112-72260).

Orissa Cyclone Rehabilitation

In March 2000 the Ramakrishna Mission decided to undertake a large-scale rehabilitation programme in the cyclone-affected areas of Orissa. The plan was to develop a model village at Kanaguli in Jagatsinghpur district. A team of professionals from Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, was engaged to conduct a socio-economic survey of the area.

On 28 April, Sri Naveen Patnaik, Chief Minister of Orissa, and Sri Nalinikanta Mohanty, Minister for Works, Housing and Parliamentary Affairs, Govt of Orissa, each inaugurated a model house and laid foundation-stones for a middle school-cum-cyclone shelter and a high school, respectively. On the same day, Swami Srikanandanaji, who is in charge of the Mission's relief operations, laid the foundation-stone for a primary school-cum-cyclone shelter.

Another similar project of constructing three school buildings in Kotanga village of Puri district is also in progress.

According to the latest reports, civil engineering survey work and final design and drawings for the cyclone-proof houses and school-cum-shelters at Kanaguli and Kotanga have been completed by Ramakrishna Mission Shilpamandira (Polytechnic), Belur. Out of the 26 houses so far taken up for construction at Kanaguli, brickwork has been completed for nine houses up to lintel level and for 14 houses up to plinth level. At Kotanga, columns have been erected for the ground floors of the three school buildings. The Ramakrishna Mission Headquarters is executing the work at Kotanga in collaboration with Ramakrishna Math, Puri.

West Bengal Cyclone Rehabilitation

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, concluded its rehabilitation programme for the flood-affected people of 8 villages in Murshidabad district, where 720 houses and 1100 toilets were built and 31 tubewells installed.

Narainpur wins National Award

On 14 April 2000 Dr K.R. Narayanan, President of India, conferred the *Dr Ambedkar National Award* (for the year 1996) on Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narainpur, for 'social understanding and uplift of the weaker sections'. The award carried a plaque, a citation and a sum of Rs 10 lakh.

It is noteworthy that on 12 March 2000 the Narainpur Ashrama was given the *Dr Bhavar Singh Porte Award* for tribal service by the Govt of Madhya Pradesh. This award came with a citation and a purse of Rs 75,000.

Children's Camp at Hyderabad

Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad, conducted in May 2000 a month-long coaching camp for children between 8 and 15 years of age. About 700 children took part in the camp. The daily programme included yogasanas, meditation, bhajans, moral lessons, etc. Smt Pratibha Bharati, Speaker, Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly, was the chief guest on the concluding day's function.

Mysore Ashrama celebrates Platinum Jubilee

Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore, celebrated its platinum jubilee by organizing a four-day devotees' convention from 18 to 21 May 2000. Smt V. Ramadevi, Governor of Karnataka, inaugurated the convention and released a commemorative volume. Noted speakers addressed the convention which was attended by about 3500 devotees and 100 monks. An exhibition on 'The Ramakrishna Movement in Karnataka', an impressive procession and a variety of cultural programmes were the highlights of the celebration. Ramakrishna-Vivekananda-Vedanta literature worth over Rs 3 lakh was sold during the period.

News from Abroad

A new shrine room, meeting hall and ashrama quarters of the Vedanta Center of Greater Washington, DC, were dedicated in a week-long ceremony which included a special puja performed by Swami Swahanandaji, head of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood, on 4 June 2000, and a ribbon-cutting ceremony and lecture delivered by Swami Smarananandaji, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, on 10 June. Over 250 devotees attended the main programme on 10 June, which also included a musical performance by the Center's youth group and the serving of cooked prasada to all.